NEW STATESMAN
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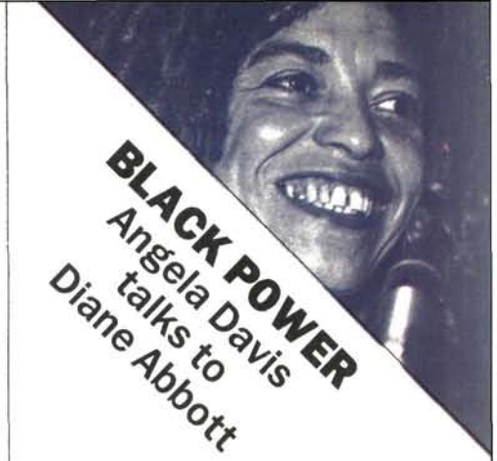
- SDP vote: Meadowcroft and Marquand on merger
- End of pre-election boom • Pearce reforms the Lords
- Edinburgh Festival • Savage on Hendrix



BLACK POWER
Angela Davis talks to Diane Abbott

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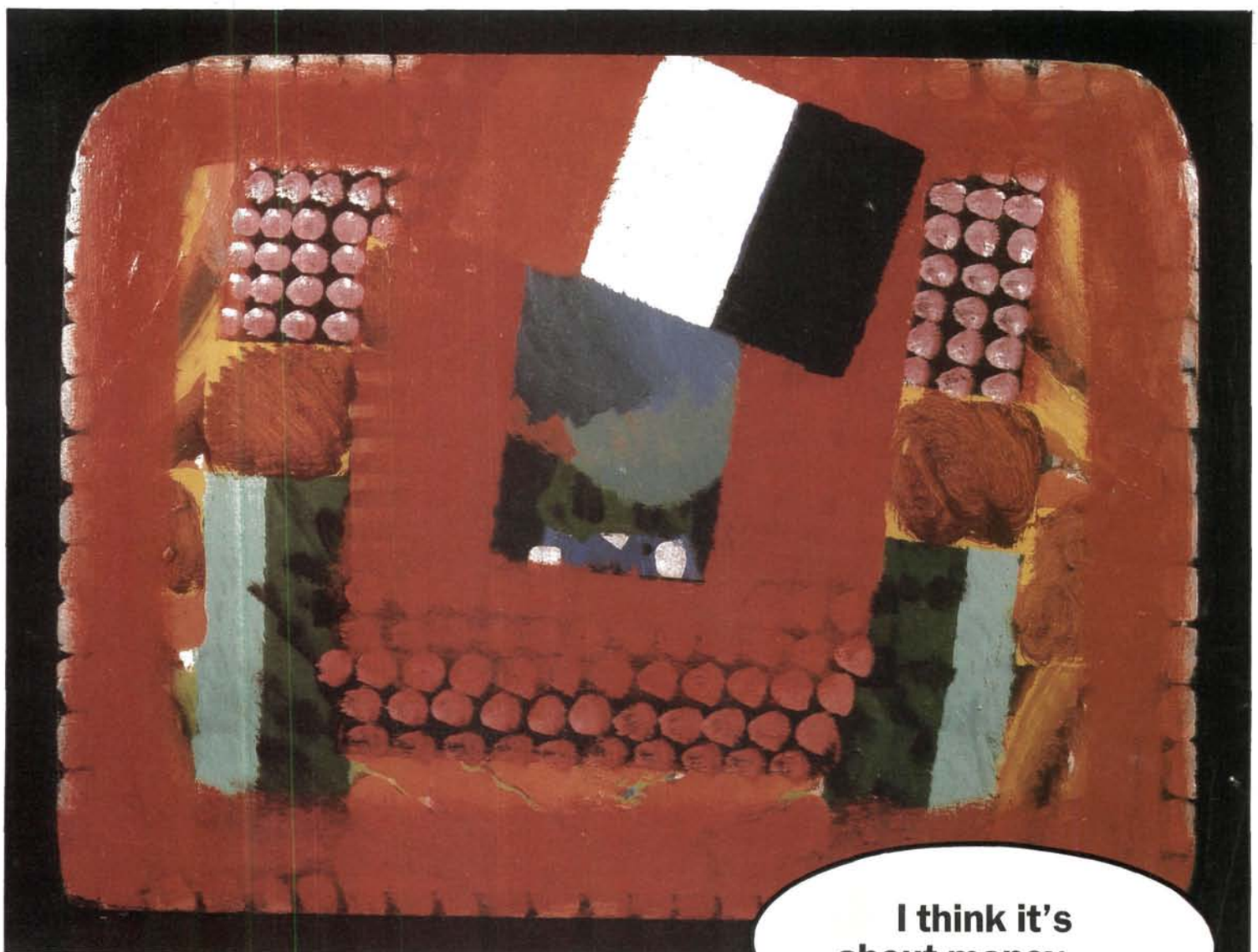

Howard Hodgkin: *In a French Restaurant*. Reproduced by kind permission of Howard Hodgkin

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Ciao!

Dear Rosa, there we were stuck in mid-August and no holiday in prospect, when Vlad comes up with the bright idea of a cappuccino in Saint Mark's. Venice not Southwark.

He suggested the week of the Venice Film Festival. Typical of Vlad to know the date. Fancies himself in a Fellini re-make. The Regatta is the same time. Even if the weather improves in Britain it's going to be too little too late. Wouldn't you rather be basking in Mediterranean sunshine?

We booked into the Hotel Lio Grande (4-star of course) overlooking the lagoon with its own swimming pool.

It all started with a phone-call to Alexandra, who had phoned to suggest we fly with her to Bologna. Trust her to choose the home of good Italian food! She wants to visit 'Unita'. You know the big Left festival. Last year they had everyone from Style Council to George McGovern. They also had three million visitors. No, not all at the one time.

Alexandra has organised the week with Rhino Tours (strange name; sounds suspiciously like a Marxism Today marketing ploy). Quo Vadis are the experts behind the scenes. Yes, its ABTA, etc. Alexandra booked us into the Hotel Re Enzo (3-star) in a really quiet area of the city. She's also managed to get us our own guides and a reception with the Mayor.

It's nice to have the option of like-minded company. And Vlad is brushing up on his Gramsci. But we'll also be popping off on our own to see the sights. They call Bologna the Oxford of Italy. Is that a compliment?

The dates are Saturday 29th August to Sunday 6th September.

We fly out from Luton and fly back from Venice.

It costs **£380** inclusive, with hotels.

£195 camping (yes, the sites are recommended).

As Alex says, it costs more than a bucket-shop holiday, but then it's **not** a bucket-shop holiday.

So anyway, Rosa why not phone 01-608 0265 or send away on the form below.

Love Emma.

Rhino Holidays

Return to: 'Rhino (MT) Holidays', 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY.

☐ Send me more details.

☐ I enclose deposit for ____ places (deposit £50 per person).

Name

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NEW STATESMAN

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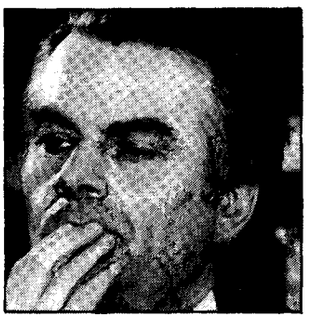
Further down the road



THE POLITICAL silly season is more serious than usual. David Owen has set himself the task of clearing a space in British politics for a social democracy which is still uncertain of definition; the majority of Social Democrats and the Liberals have yet to prove they can forge a coherent Alliance; and Labour is set for a conference debate on proportional representation. The ground continues to shift under the frozen tundra of British politics.

The forms of democracy have been shaken up most of all by the present government and by the Social Democrats. The first prescribed one-person-one-vote in trade union affairs, and has sought to elevate consumer above political choice over services provided both locally and nationally. The second, by its formation, gave force to the familiar Liberal complaint that the electoral system was manifestly unfair and arguably inefficient. The government's contributions are likely to be permanent, in some form; while the debate over proportional representation has clearly taken hold, and may gather momentum and support — though it is not presently easy to see how it could succeed.

Labour has been conservative on these issues, and in one respect at least has been right to be so. The salience given to the marketplace is likely to run out of steam in this parliamentary session, and its limitations are increasingly likely to be exposed. It is right to encourage more consumer pressure on services, especially those bureaucratically and often inefficiently provided — and Labour cannot push that genie back into the bottle. But the market's constant and intrinsically inevitable feature is its inequity; and of more interest and urgency in the coming period will be how national and local governments could or should moderate and control that feature — in housing, health and education especially — rather than in making further cosmetic and meaningless extensions to market freedom. We cannot tackle the inner cities, the failing educational system and the burgeoning demands of health care through the market, and expect other than social schism.

But Labour's conservatism looks bad on the more obvious democratic issues. Not just because constitutional reform deserves a good hearing; but because there is much more road to travel towards democracy than the Tories will ever undertake. The left should not be afraid to press on down it.

On constitutional reform, the Labour Party has to answer the root charge of inequity. It is not easy to see how it can, by its own lights, defend the first-past-the-post system: democratic socialism cannot stand on the platform of seeking to ensure everyone has a voice, then deny effective representation to a large part of the electorate — especially as the decay of the two-party system has meant that both Labour and Tory governments have been elected with less than 45 per cent support of the country. The argument that we didn't have to think about this awkward subject because the country was politically split into two large 'class interest' parties has been growing more threadbare: now it has worn through.

The relationship of local to central government is put on the agenda by the Tories' proposed moves on inner cities, education and housing. It is right to stress that the changes being ushered in are centralising and potentially, where not actually, authoritarian in intent or effect; but that does not absolve the opposition parties of the need for thought on what such a relationship should be. There is a real political problem about elected representatives who get elected on a turnout of only some 30 per cent of their electorate; and there *is* point to the view that the present rating system does exempt many who enjoy local council services from paying for them (the poll tax solution is iniquitous and regressive — what's wrong with a local income tax?).

Finally, there is the great issue of the 1970s which has been the forgotten issue of the 1980s: industrial democracy. It was opposed by a coalition of business and union interests after the publication of the Bullock Committee's report in 1975; since then, the union-channel approach proposed by Bullock has grown to seem even less possible now than it did then.

But the responsibility of socialists to propose ways by which popular control over work can be achieved has not diminished. The lesson of the last decade seems to be that there can be no one scheme; and already such arrangements as co-operatives, worker buy-outs, employee share ownership and other half- or quarter-way houses are up and running. In part, this closer involvement merely reflects the fact that more and more workers are increasingly highly skilled,and increasingly drawn into the 'management' of the company; in part, it reflects a need to mobilise greater reserves of creativity and energy than can be expected in a conventionally hierarchical structure; in part it is an extension of democratic choice and debate into the economic sphere, from which it has been long excluded.

This is the skeleton of a democratic agenda for Labour: a skeleton on which it will have to put flesh if it is to regain the democratic initiative.

John Lloyd

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RUSSIAN DIARY

Moscow

We got on very well with Lena, our Intourist guide. A forceful, sassy Muscovite in her late twenties, she didn't bother with the 'here in the Soviet Union everything is wonderful' approach to Westerners.

Stupid questions got the answers they deserved. On our first day at the Moscow Youth Hotel one of our group asked if there was a lift to the twentieth floor. Lena replied scathingly: 'Why would you need one?'

Lena is one of a new and rare breed of Soviet woman, with whom Soviet man, and most of her friends, have yet to catch up. She admitted she really doesn't know how to console her girl friends when they complain to her that they are bad wives 'because we don't have enough time to iron our husbands' shirts in the morning.'

It's the old problem of supply and demand, one that even a socialist planned economy can't cater for. Twenty million people, mostly men, were killed in the Great Patriotic War and there still aren't enough to go round. 'Every third woman is still longing for a husband and child,' and as long as there are enough women in the Soviet Union to pander to men's every whim Lena is unlikely to meet a Soviet New Man.

Comrades like Ivan, one of Lena's associates, don't help. He doesn't even bother discussing contraception with his wife, as 'it makes her embarrassed'. And once Soviet woman finds her man, there's no guarantee of marital happiness. In the cities, every other marriage ends in divorce and one in three husbands and wives part in rural areas. The most-used form of contraception is still abortion, although the advent of Aids has led to condoms being more easily available. A round half-dozen terminations is common.

The Soviet constitution guarantees sexual equality for women, but, like in Britain, you can't legislate for attitudes. As Ivan explains: 'Women occupy few positions high in the Party because they would find the work too hard.'

○

Noorus Youth Camp, near Narva on the Estonian coast, was 'dry' like most of the Soviet Union. The bar at the disco sold thick sweet coffee and sickly Pepsi, made under licence. By the end of the second day we were rationing our duty-free vodka. By the end of the third we were squabbling over the last of the oranges.

But the setting was scenic enough. A pine forest backed onto an expanse of sandy beach, disturbed only by a few swimmers and the regular patrol of a Soviet gunboat. It just about compensated for a daily diet of gristly ersatz meatballs, sour cream and hard black bread.

Of course, not everyone at Noorus ate the same food. Every meal time we watched as waitresses swept past us bearing gold-rimmed plates and bottles of mineral water to the apparatchiks' dining-room. And they had very comfortable chairs.

We were spending a week at Noorus to try and 'promote international friendship, co-operation and peace among young people'. In theory. In practice we were participants in a production so well-staged it would put Peter Mandelson to shame. The young Soviets claimed to be on holiday. But each had been hand-picked by their workplace or college in response to a request by Sputnik (the state youth tourist organisation) for suitably clued-up comrades.

Other guests included disappointed East Germans who thought they were coming on vacation and naive Americans who believed they were building a new détente by paying to spend time on workcamps. Maybe they were, but we strongly suspected the Soviets were laughing all the way to the foreign currency banks.

The discussions covered topics including 'The Achievements of the Great October Socialist Revolution', 'Why Does Man Conquer Outer Space?' and Afghanistan. There was a lot of give and take: the Americans giving and the Soviets taking.

Occasional culture clashes between liberal Californians and staid Soviets were amusing. 'Andrei and I, we love each other,' exclaimed Bud as, carried away in the spirit of international friendship, he slapped his hand on Andrei's knee. 'But not in a sexual way,' Bud hastily added, which was lucky for Andrei, as homosexuality is a criminal offence in the Soviet Union.

In private, many young Soviets would speak freely. But part of the reason why they stuck closely to the party line in public was, we suspected, an ubiquitous bear-like man. He claimed his job was to 'welcome foreign tourists', but he spent most of his time casting a paternal eye over his younger compatriots. Even to the extent of walking alongside as they chatted with Westerners. We cynical capitalists were reassured, though, when just before he left he handed each of us a banana-flavoured toffee.

ROGER WODDIS

The Shock Market

'Most market-makers were just happy they could go home with their coats on.' — a City dealer

The cry was 'Sell! — for God's sake, sell,
And grab what you can from the kitty!'
Some thought of poison, some of rope,
As yuppy hearts were drained of hope,
And trousers were filled in the City.

They felt the flames that leapt from hell,
And some of them started screaming;
But others clung, as they'd done before,
To the coloured coat that Nigel wore,
Because it was made for dreaming.

All that the present phase required
(He said) was a touch on the tiller,
Which caused a few to rub their eyes,
And others to emit loud cries
That grew uncontrollably shriller.

And some of them prayed and some perspired,
But there was no need for panic.
The City is strong and here to stay;
As confident builders used to say,
They'll never sink the *Titanic*.

○

To Tallin, one of the Soviet Union's most beautiful cities. But Intourist has different ideas. Our first port of call was the Estonian capital's industrial outskirts, rather like bringing a visitor to London to the Isle of Dogs. A flat industrial tundra, it's punctuated with squat tower blocks. Next stop was a flower collective, where the workers enthusiastically extolled the virtues of the Estonian white nights, when the sun never sets. Communist carnations are much like capitalist ones.

Then to the Lastuchka pioneer camp, near Narva: the state gives parents a massive subsidy to pay for the pioneers, and guarantees a place for every child that wants one. Before we leave, the camp matriarch requests that the tallest and strongest Westerner (a Finn) steps forward, together with the biggest young pioneer. The two agree to be blindfolded, grasp the pillows thrust into their hands and step into a circle of cheering children. They flay wildly about, completely disoriented, and just manage to strike each other occasional glancing, harmless blows. The match was declared a draw, a curiously apt spectacle.

○

What do you do on a warm Saturday night in Moscow? Not much with our cab driver. He wouldn't have that Patrice Lumumba in the back of his cab. He tells us in a thick Moscow dialect that he'd like to put up a sign in his car saying 'Whites Only'. He doesn't like the Africans who come to Moscow to study, perhaps because, by his own admission, they can speak better Russian than him. Luckily, by the time he launched into an explanation of his favourite pastime, African-bashing, we'd already arrived at our destination. Quite an education for three roubles (£3).

Red Square was closed — the next passenger flight from West Germany could be due to land at any moment. Hundreds of Russians and tourists mill aimlessly, expectantly, at its edges. A bar, or even a kiosk, would have done a roaring trade but there wasn't even a Soviet-made Pepsi in sight. We ask a Russian where the best places to go are — he recommends a tourist hotel where they take hard currency. Everything else was closed. It was 9.30pm.

Arbat is Moscow's artists' quarter. Although it has been beautifully restored, the painters who work there claim it has lost all its original character. It's very dark, because there aren't enough lightbulbs in the streetlamps. Arbat is full of people wandering up and down. It seems there's nothing else to do.

On our walk down we pass a group sitting round a guitarist. On our return a militia man is frogmarching him off to a waiting van. There was a vague air of expectancy, as though something was about to happen but probably only the men around the corner in the Kremlin know what. On the streets, as well as in the Central Committee, the limits of *glasnost* are being pushed.

Adam Le Bor

Adam Le Bor is editor of Fairly Serious Monthly.

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Open letter to Neil Kinnock

Dear Neil,
Giving the Labour Party advice about its defence policy is becoming a national hobby, so this is my sixpenceworth. First of all those who blame Labour's defeat in 1987 on its defence policy are simply scapegoating and they ought to be told so. Despite a press almost universally and ignorantly hostile to the policy, there is no evidence that on it was the election lost. The presence of Joan Ruddock and Chris Mullin in parliament is evidence enough that seats could be won and majorities increased by those who knew what they were talking about.

I write with additional conviction after a ten-day tour of New Zealand. There a non-nuclear policy is so much a vote winner that even Mr Bolger's opposition National Party has been desperately trying to steal Labour's clothes on this issue. By the time you read this letter the results of the New Zealand election will be known. Polls still indicate a Labour win though Labour's economic policies are far from popular. The *New Zealand Herald* of 31 July suggested that Labour was ahead of National 'by somewhere between 3.7 per cent and 24 per cent'. That's the kind of polling to keep an election interesting.

But should Labour unexpectedly lose it will not be because of its defence policy. On the contrary. In a Defence Committee poll of 1986, 92 per cent opposed the stationing of nuclear weapons in New Zealand, and 69 per cent wanted no nuclear-powered or armed ships in harbours. Despite all kinds of outside pressure, our Sir Geoffrey included, the policy grows more popular.

The first lesson from all this for Labour here is self-confidence. The faint-hearted need to be heard and answered. Even Robert McNamara (ex-US Defense Secretary) now concedes that nuclear weapon policies are 'bankrupt.' So they are. Any security policy which rests on an ultimate willingness to blow up the world has to be. Despite the endless Radio 4/SDP/Robin Day genuflections to what is always reverentially called 'strong defence', we actually have no defence policy worthy of the name at the moment. Enoch Powell has described British nuclear policies as 'barmy'. He is quite correct.

We did not have a coherent defence policy from Labour in 1987. The cart was well before the horse. Defence is not an idea on its own but must relate to threats. Authorities as various as General Rogers (ex-Allied Commander in Europe) and Sir Michael Howard (founder of the International Institute for Strategic Studies) have cast spadefuls of doubt over the idea of the Soviet Union plunging into a war of European conquest. No surprise really. The Soviets could hardly trust their 'allies', the Poles, to start with, and they don't seem to be able to do very well in Afghanistan.

In any event peace is not just a military matter. There is much hard work to be done at many levels on the process of turning 'enemies' into terrestrial co-tenants at least, if not friends. Labour must take the British 'independent' nuclear weapon issue head on with courage and conviction. Morality apart (and it cannot be apart) Polaris, Trident or any British hybrid has no credible military purpose. Any actual use against the Soviet Union, as a variety of ex-military people have made quite clear, would be suicidal. If the Soviets did take a fancy to the Shetlands or the Falklands and occupied them with conventional forces, are we really going to respond with mass murder followed by retaliatory domestic incineration? Of course not. Moreover, any argument in favour of a British 'independent' deterrent must be in favour of nuclear weapons for any and everyone else. Let's have some courage on this subject. Denis Healey, in his new spare time, could give your front bench some lessons. They don't have to look like rabbits in headlights when defence comes up.

He could also give them some instruction in cruise missiles, Fl-lls and the like. They are not here to deter nuclear attack but to be used even in a war not yet nuclear. That is why they must go now. They are part of the 'flexible response' strategy which has to imply the winnability of nuclear wars. It is quite mad. David Owen ought to have repudiated it after the Palme Commission report which he co-authored in 1982.

Don't wait till six months before the next election. Get on to Mr Stoltenberg, Norway's Labour foreign minister, who is trying now to get his country and NATO to abandon flexible response nonsense. People know quite well that you can't fight with nuclear weapons but most don't yet realise that such are our present plans.

Finally a word about NATO. A little less reverence would not come amiss. This alliance is not the best thing since sliced bread. It and the Warsaw Pact are militant cancers on world society which have long left behind the politics which produced them. The vision of one world, common security for all, and a just use of the world's resources must be the central core of Labour's message into which all the rest fits.

Take heart from New Zealand down under. And, with respect, start on a fully coherent policy now and involve the party and the country in the process. You won't lack support.
All good wishes,
Yours sincerely,

Bruce Kent
Vice Chair, CND

What's going on?

NOT MUCH has been heard of Neil Kinnock's plan to 'widen the franchise' for choosing Labour MPs since he won the vote in the biggest trade union, the Transport and General Workers, last month. As a result of that vote, important changes to the party's constitution are certain to be voted through at Labour's national conference in Brighton in two months time — but the details of the leader's favoured scheme, for local electoral colleges, are obscure.

Things may become clearer when a working party chaired by St Helens North MP John Evans meets this Friday (14 August) to finalise options for reform which will go to the National Executive on 15 September. The working party consists of Gordon Colling of the print union NGA, Charlie Turnock of the railway workers and Roy Hattersley, the deputy leader of the party — but no constituency party representatives. It is likely to

identify three options, and this is our best guess as to what they will be.

Option 1. The status quo
Labour candidates and MPs are currently selected and reselected by the 'General Committee' of their constituency Labour Party, made up of delegates from local party branches, trade unions, youth and women's sections and 'socialist societies' (11 of them, including the Fabians and the Co-op). The minimum reform for 'widening the franchise' would be to require delegates to vote as instructed by whichever body they represent, instead of by secret ballot. It's not clear whether candidates would then have to attend several selection meetings or one big one.

Option 2. 'Pure' one-member-one-vote
All party members in a constituency would have one vote in selection and reselection. Affiliated trade unions, sections and societies would have nomination and shortlisting rights but no votes except through their members who are also party members in the constituency. The main uncertainty of the system is the question of postal ballots: the Labour Party is traditionally very hostile to them, preferring the 'participatory democracy' of voting (but by secret ballot) at meetings where candidates can be asked questions. But most of those pushing for one-member-one-vote want some postal votes, for members genuinely unable to attend selection meetings (Peter Kellner has argued in these pages that there is then no case against postal ballots for everyone).

Option 3. Local electoral colleges
Party members would vote as in option 2, but trade unions would keep their votes. The party members' vote would make up, say, 50 per cent of the 'college' while the unions might have a 40 per cent share, with 10 per cent for socialist societies. (The college would be divided up in the same proportions as delegates on the General Committee are divided between party branches, unions and socialist societies). The votes in each section of the college would be counted and then added together. Votes in the trade union part of the college would be decided by union branch

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meetings, each branch having one vote per delegate (at present, union delegates use their skill and judgment to vote in secret for the candidate they personally prefer).

Many party agents and regional officers say privately that the local electoral college system would be an administrative nightmare. One says it would 'entrench the power of caucus and clique and multiply disputes over selection'.

In fact, it is no more complicated than the existing system, but with the extra work of organising a one-member-one-vote ballot as well, whereas the 'pure' system cuts out the swathe of paperwork dealing with affiliated organisations. Kinnock's advisers are now cautious about which particular form of 'wider franchise' they want; they simply want to make sure that the Labour conference doesn't end up voting against all the options, including the status quo, as it did in 1984 — leaving it with the status quo.

The main argument for pure one-member-one-vote is the fact that so few people, even party members, understand the workings of the Labour Party's internal democracy: one-member-one-vote is easy to understand and can be seen to be fair.

The main argument for the local electoral college is that it retains the local link with trade unions. This is good in principle — if derelict in practice — but is supposed to have the added benefit of ensuring that the trade union block votes support *some* kind of one-member-one-vote system at Brighton. The real question is whether the unions will support one-member-one-vote without this sop. Although Kinnock talked to the Transport and General workers about local electoral colleges, the motion that the union's conference actually passed was simply in favour of 'widening the franchise' for Labour Party selections. The union's delegation to Labour's conference can interpret it how it likes.

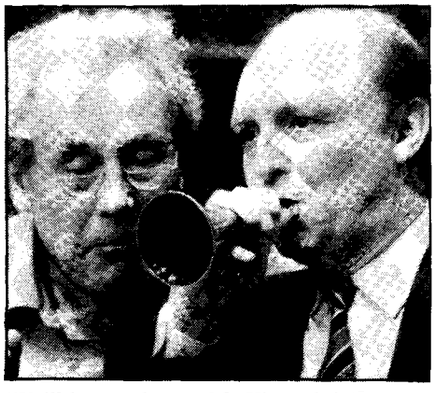
John Rentoul

If the caption fits

No 30

Two policepersons look slightly puzzled outside the Labour movement's shrine of hope — Margaret Thatcher's Dulwich retirement home — where CND painted human shadows on Hiroshima Day. Give us captions, speech bubbles or graffiti by Monday 24 August. Ten pounds for the winner; the non-competitive humour consultant's decision is final.

No 28: winner



'We'll let you know, Mr Kinnock.' (*Leonora Casement, London SW17.*) Runner-up: 'The thing is, Neil, Joshua used a bigger trumpet.' (*Steve Horton, London N10.*)

Tanks for the mammary

'THERE'S ANE end of ane auld sang,' remarked the Earl of Seafield as the bells of Edinburgh tolled the passing of the Act of Union. I know how he felt. For you might say 'ane auld sang' ended for a few of us with the news that William Rust House — home since 1949 of the *Daily Worker* and then its wan successor, the *Morning Star* — is to be sold to David Sullivan, publisher of *Sunday Sport*. A time for even an apostate comrade to feel the pangs of nostalgia.

And why not? Part of my youth is in that building. Never since has the way been laid so certainly. And, after all, even an excommunicated Catholic might be a trifle shocked at the news that the Sistine Chapel was to be converted into a topless disco.

Mr Sullivan plans a bosom companion for his Sunday sheet, which measures its galley proofs not in ems but in nipples. His editorial director Mike Gabbert has already warned us what to expect of the new daily. It will be, he was reported as saying, a 'bottom of the barrel newspaper', with more 'colour boobs' than any of its rivals.

Enough of Mr Sullivan. He has found his niche in the market economy and plainly has no intention of going broke by making the error of underestimating the reading — or ogling — public's intelligence. At least he has a clear sense of direction, which is rather more than can be said for the *Morning Star*. The protracted row between the paper's pro-Soviet 'tankies' and the Euro-communists of the party's hierocracy, has done no good to either party or paper. Membership and circulation have both slumped.

It was all very different when I arrived at the *Daily Worker* in the early '50s, a bushy-tailed young Communist with a solid training as a reporter on a provincial newspaper. Douglas Hyde, the paper's news editor, had not long gone to the embrace of the Church of Rome, but for the rest of us there were few doubts. They would come later in the decade with Khrushchev's epistle to the 20th Congress. But in those days, memories of the Russian wartime sacrifice still lingered. Uncle Joe was in Moscow, presiding over the Webbs' New Civilisation.

Harry Pollit, the party's general secretary, big Peter Kerrigan, the industrial organiser, and Rajee Palme-Dutt, the party's chief 'thinker', were the true disciples, ready, we know now, to dance a gopak whenever Stalin hummed the tune. Tito a traitor to the cause of world socialism? No more than we had always suspected. The *Worker*'s foreign editor dashed off a book, *Tito's Plot Against Europe*, proving the case against all reasonable doubt of those who already had no doubts.

Of course, it was not all dialectical materialism with the morning coffee. There was a good deal of fun to be had cocking a snook at the capitalist press. Yet the fact that people like Leon Griffiths (creator, among much else, of *Minder*) and me didn't feel like complete party hacks was probably due to two men: Allen Hutt, the paper's chief sub-editor, and the finest classical typographer of his day, who always insisted on the highest professional standards; and the editor, John Ross Campbell. He was a remarkable man. Wounded at Gallipoli, where he had collected a Military Cross, he already had his place in history: the 'Campbell Case' had helped bring down Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour government.

Hutt presented me with a copy of his work, *An Outline of Newspaper Typography*, to mark my first by-line: the 'best news story this old timer has read for a long time'. Generous words. Oddly enough the by-line had appeared not above a political report but over my ringside description of Randolph Turpin's defeat of Sugar Ray Robinson. To this day I have never been quite sure why it became second lead on the front page. Defeat of American capitalism by working-class English boy?

Campbell held a fine balance between the impatience of the paper's pros and the party functionaries-cum-reporters. But there were frictions. Once I was summoned to his office to explain why, on viewing a photo of the Soviet Praesidium taking the May Day salute, I had remarked to no one in particular: 'I bet those buggers wear their medals in the bath.' I said it was meant as a joke. Johnny looked at me gravely. 'Be more careful to whom you make your jokes, comrade.' And added: 'Do you know I have been told that I mustn't send smutty postcards from the seaside conferences to the female comrades?' And, sure enough, the fat ladies and single entendre that had brought light relief to the serious business of waiting for the revolution dried up and were replaced with views of Morecambe Bay at sunset.

One reporter took it upon himself to huckster the *Collected Works* of Stalin around the office. Sixpence (old money) a week. We had reached Volume 13, every bit as unreadable as its predecessors, when Nikki did his hatchet job on the great man. We never did get our tanners back. Years later the young Sean Connery was my lodger. The second-hand bed he bought had only three legs. It was Comrade Joe's last great humanitarian act that he should supply support for the future James Bond's athletic sex.

On out-of-town assignments we were a kind of missionary: living proof to the activists that there really was a life beyond the street corner sales of the *Daily Worker*. But even away from the office Big Brother might be watching. At a union conference in North Wales I was approached by

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two of the party's best known trade unionists. Faces stern. 'We are concerned about your dilettante behaviour,' they said. A dilettante on £7 a week, whose idea of a treat was a Chinese meal bought by a crime reporter on a Sunday paper who paid his party dues in noodles and sweet and sour? I had been seen drinking with a local reporter (female) when I should have been at the union's Party faction meetings. There would be a report, I was warned. If there was, I heard nought of it.

And the comrades who took me to task? One was to leave the party and the trade union movement in a cloud of scandal. The other was Les Cannon, who went on to purge the Communists from the electricians' union. I forgive you, Les. Which is rather more than I can do for those who would turn a mansion of my past into a palace of soft porn.

Llew Gardner

Llew Gardner is a freelance journalist and TV presenter. He joined the staff of the Daily Worker *in 1951 and resigned at the time of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.*

Labour's love lost in Scotland

MOVES ARE AFOOT to get Allen Adams, the Labour MP for Paisley North, sacked as the party's Scottish whip because of a newspaper article he wrote attacking fellow MP Ken Livingstone (Brent East) in fierce and colourful terms. Already Labour's Scottish Executive has demanded that he explain his behaviour.

It is no secret that Ken Livingstone has not endeared himself to Scottish MPs since the election (hence Brian Wilson's remarks in last week's *NS* to which Livingstone will reply next week). But there are few if any who would endorse the sentiments contained in 'the Allen Adams Angle' on 4 August in the *Paisley Daily Express*.

Under the headline 'Expel this pipsqueak clown now', Adams did not seek to spare the hyperbole:

> In my opinion it's time a Scot or a Geordie boot was directed at this pipsqueak's posterior which would influence his movements in the direction of the Thames. It's certainly time the Labour Party took decisive action to bring to an end once and for all this gauleiter's reign of terror in London . . . this sycophant indulges only in self-aggrandisement at the expense of the people and the party.

What apparently provoked Adam's outburst is an invitation he received from Ken Livingstone to a conference entitled 'Changing the World and Tackling Heterosexism'. After suggesting that 'this clown of a politician' wanted to make homosexual acts 'compulsory in public', Adams wrote: 'I must confess I was a bit worried when I got the invite. It's not the kind of party you normally invite six-foot bearded Scotsmen to. Perhaps it's because I'm so butch or maybe I have an admirer I don't know about.'

When we spoke to him this week, Adams was, to say the least, unrepentant. He thought his article had been 'fairly moderate'. He accused Livingstone of having made some 'abusive and insulting' remarks about Scottish MPs and said: 'One wonders whether he suffers from some kind of racialism himself.' He welcomed the opportunity to discuss his views with members of the Scottish Executive, although he added that he was 'astounded' by its failure to ask Ken Livingstone to explain himself as well.

His article has upset his constituency party too; talk of deselection is probably premature, but there are certain to be motions at the Paisley North constituency meeting next week censuring him and calling for his removal as Scottish whip.

● Over in the East, the Labour Party also has its share of problems. Four Labour councillors, including the former Labour leader Alex Wood, have resigned from Edinburgh District Council over the party's policy of spending cuts, leaving Labour with a majority of just one and a couple of rather tricky by-elections to fight (majorities of 31 and 224). The four claim that since the district party has agreed to comply with government-imposed spending cuts of £9 million, they could no longer adequately represent it or their constituents in the City Chambers. They believe that the party should have opted for an illegal budget followed by mass resignations.

The significance of their action lies not in its suspect political logic but in what it reveals about the state of the city's hard left. From a position of great influence, if not control, of the district party, the ultras and their allies have now become a marginal force, fragmented and demoralised. Soft-left strategists were quick to point out that Alex Wood's self-proclaimed flight to the wilderness had much in common with that of another well-known politician who resigned on the same day (and who can take some credit for wiping Edinburgh's troubles off the front pages of the Scottish press). His name was David Owen.

Rob Edwards

The Iron Fist

'LET ME KNOW if the noise is disturbing you,' said the officer in charge of the soldiers who were drilling holes in Mrs Jaber's house. After they had finished drilling, the soldiers plugged the holes with sticks of gelignite and blew up the house. When the dust had settled and the roof, the upper floor and the staircase had gone, the officer approached Mrs Jaber, apologised for the damage, and informed her that she was entitled to claim for compensation.

This Alice in Wonderland logic is applied by the Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank, where the houses of Palestinians are demolished as part of a 'collective punishment' policy. Intended as a deterrent, house demolition punishes the whole family for the activities of one of its members, for which the rest of the family may not even be indirectly responsible.

Collective punishment — the term applies to house demolitions, travel bans on the inhabitants of a whole village, curfews and sealing the entrances to camps — has increased since the Iron Fist policy was announced by defence minister Yitzak Rabin in 1985, according to Al Haq, a

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human rights centre operating in the West Bank, and funded by War on Want.

Al Haq (Law in the Service of Humanity) led me to Mrs Nahida Jaber, who has lived in a spacious two-storey hose in Ramallah since her marriage in 1953. Mrs Jaber first heard that her son was wanted for a security offence in November 1986 when she read about it in the papers. Israel was seeking his extradition from the United States, where he was studying for his Masters Degree as a Fulbright scholar in Nashville, Tennessee. The offence was said to have been committed in 1983. Mrs Jaber's son had not been arrested, tried or convicted, and at the time the house was blown up he had not lived in it for years.

No damage was visible from the ground floor, but we made our way up the newly built staircase and emerged into the mid-afternoon sun, onto a heap of rubble on the upper floor where her son's room had been. Mrs Jaber kept breaking down as she spoke. 'Soldiers used to come often — sometimes twice a day — asking questions, checking and measuring the house. Then they came on that day — 20 or 30 of them. They cordoned off the whole area. We just sat in the hallway while they brought in sheet metal, drills and explosives. They were upstairs for four hours. They said we had to clear out all the furniture and go outside. I have three grandchildren under 18 months old and they were sleeping, so we had to carry them out into the street. After a few minutes we heard a big explosion. When we looked up the roof was gone.' The Jaber family were among the lucky ones. Five habitable rooms were left.

So far this year there have been 27 house demolitions on the West Bank. The Israeli authorities estimate the number of houses destroyed during the first 15 years of occupation at 1,265 — most of these in the early years. The numbers shot up again from four in 1984 to 55 in 1985 as a result of the Iron Fist policy.

Al Haq fights many of these cases through the courts. If it fails to stop the demolition, as in the Jaber case, it seeks compensation for its client, and permission to rebuild. The law in the occupied territories is mind-bogglingly complex, with Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian and Egyptian laws in layers beneath the 2,000-odd new military laws and regulations introduced by the Israelis since 1967. Al Haq maintains that collective punishment constitutes a violation of basic human rights and is therefore illegal under international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention — an argument which the Israeli High Court does not acknowledge.

Measures like demolitions, administrative detention and deportation appear to be aimed at controlling and intimidating the whole Palestinian population. Far from acting as a deterrent, measures like these fuel Palestinian resistance to the occupation. They weld together all sections of the population, uniting those old enough to remember 1948 and 1967 and those too young to have known anything other than life under occupation, creating a bond between the displaced in refugee camps and middle-class Palestinians like Mrs Jaber. As she watched her house exploding, huddled with her family and all her possessions in the street outside, Mrs Jaber put it this way to the officer in charge: 'You can blow up my house, but you'll never blow up my home.'

Alison Whyte

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH

A bunch of ex-assistant grandees

Edward Pearce

THE PROGRESS to the Upper House of the new nobility is slightly depressing. It isn't that one begrudges places to Mrs Thatcher's list of the fallen. With the likes of Prior, Pym, Carlisle and Stevas up there, it looks indeed like a hit list amended to a kiss-it-better list. No actual harm in that. But since we do have a second House which is quite busy, should the honours really come as tax-exempted pay-off for the prime minister of the day's earlier deletions and handbaggings?

If it were left to me, we would have an elected second chamber with an eight-year term representing perhaps 250 enlarged constituencies. But unwisely, it is not left to me, so we would do best to keep discussion in the realm of what might be done. The House of Lords is there, unextirpated, a fact of life, and to be fair, not by any means an illiberal or complacent part of parliament. Unreformed, the Lords has annoyed Mrs Thatcher and inconvenienced her no end, which is more than you say for the apple-bringing class down the school.

However, the list is still a bad one, especially on the Tory side. It is made up of men whose political careers are concluded but who in their day were grandees or assistant grandees and who now follow the sun down with a gratifying particle of nobility. They are so many prize Suffolk punches put out to clover. We shall get *some* contribution from them. Lapels will be grasped and we shall be reminded of 'when I was Secretary of State for Iron Filings' or whatever. What we shan't get is the four-day-a-week, bill-scrutinising, difficulty-raising trouble-taking which represents the continuation of the Commons by other means. We shan't truly have parliamentary peers.

The hero on this front, in the eyes of Tory Lords as well, is Michael Foot. His last list, which offended the lady no end, contained middle-rank politicians in their fifties in and about the rank of junior minister who had lost their seats and wanted to go on working in parliament. The class of Stallards, Stoddarts and Ted Grahams has more than justified Michael Foot's judgment. More of the same is badly needed, especially on the Conservative side. Notoriously, and on their own private admission, the Tories are desperate for working talent in the Lords.

To put it crudely but not inaccurately, Rodney Elton was very good and made a passable impression of doing everything on the legislative side. He was so good that he was offered a job outside and took it. Those who remain to assist Lords Young and Whitelaw are nice boys and good to their mothers but hardly par for government. It was open to Mrs Thatcher to elevate capable middle-rank politicians. There are people marking time in the Commons who would have no difficulty in doing a dazzling job in the Lords. The sort of proficient, competent type who is not intended by fate to get beyond Minister of State would represent a major leap forward from the dim norm of Lord Belstead.

BUT THE principle should not apply simply to former MPs. The notion of life peers makes possible a variety of expertise, though it also creates a further sheaf of patronage. It would be no bad thing to see the abler people of local government coming in, another opening for the Tories who have so many losers with time on their hands to choose from, and one would like to see politically intelligent people outside the heavy organisations committing themselves to making the Lords work. Though as a matter of principle no journalist should ever accept any kind of honour.

The two flaws in the Lords as at present constituted are that it is the product of peremptory patronage and that it is residual. We are never clear in this country whether membership of the Upper House is functional or honorific. Notoriously the ability to flatter with coronets confers upon any prime minister a hold on the affections of the dispossesed he or she would not otherwise enjoy. It is not with us as it was with Milton's Lucifer:

> Him the Almighty Power
> Hurled flaming headlong from the ethereal sky
> With hideous ruin and combustion down
> To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
> In adamantine chains and penal fire,
> Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

Enoch Powell and John Biffen may feel a touch like that, but British politics is smoother and less divisive. Even Hell is oil-fired. And indeed the Lords has some of the qualities of a convalescent, attentuated Hell where, amidst sham-Gothic grandeur and with pleasant facilities for afternoon tea, gin and dinner, the once aspiring are gently punished with the contemplation of the pale periphery of power. It is a Hell frankly much sought after, and the greatest charge against it is the servility which the prospect of getting a place there induces among people who should be unrelenting critics.

We accept without questioning that patronage should lie in the hands of the head of government. And interestingly the last prime minister to push patronage to the margin, Edward Heath, who had a noble scorn for it, came to a sticky end. In Britain wheels get greased before they begin to squeak.

Somehow I wouldn't expect to ingratiate myself with Neil Kinnock, never mind the lady, by suggesting that perhaps three full terms in the Commons should automatically create an *entitlement* to membership of the Lords which might be taken up later by any MP so qualified on losing his or her seat or retirement at 60 or less, and that attendance in the Lords should cease at 75. It is a breathtakingly simple knifestroke through the whole apparatus of begging and giving, and it would add steadily without effort to the Upper House's reserves of fit and working talent. Who in any party is radical enough or brave enough to take up *that* modest proposal and run with it? □

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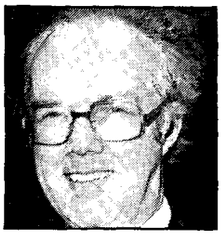

MICHAEL MEADOWCROFT

The SDP ballot: align up, align up!

THE SDP ballot produced the second worst result possible for the Alliance parties: an indecisive vote in favour of merger in principle. The only worse result would have been an indecisive vote against. Arguably, to be in tune with general constitutional practice, it required a two-thirds majority to be comfortable. The actual vote was some 10 percentage points short of that target. There will now be some weeks of more or less secret brokerage, with occasional public break-outs, and, I guess, more SDP blood-letting at its Portsmouth conference at the end of the month.

Liberals are somewhat more relaxed, though there is a certain amount of edginess around until we can see how the due processes will shake down. The obvious aim must be to keep all our colleagues on board. To achieve that means keeping options open as long as possible on both text and procedure. It has been fun watching Liberal spokespersons, desperate to show typical Liberal predatory generosity, casting around for some facet of social democracy they could profess to be happy to take on board.

I have a typically innocent and open view of it all. I want my erstwhile allies to persuade me of that essence of social democracy which is relevant today and which, therefore, must go into a merged party's Statement of Principles. I want to be persuaded, but if anyone starts with the social market economy I may well start throwing things. It is not a philosophy but a mechanism for the implementation of philosophy. All parties can legitimately state a belief in it, the difference between them being how much social and how much market.

Nor will I buy anything which smacks of nostalgia for a misty-eyed golden age of Labour. The social democrats failed to win the Labour Party for that mirage: they have now failed for a second time with the Alliance. There is no reason to encourage them to try a third time at the expense of the Liberal Party. In any case it is an approach based intrinsically on policy rather than philosophy, which is why the SDP has the European Community and NATO actually written into its constitution. Liberals want to know what social democracy is, on which social democratic policies are based, so that merger negotiations can concentrate on the fundamental issue for any politicial movement: the Statement of Principles that must head its constitution. If we can agree that, then I believe the problem of party structures, including policy-making, will not be insurmountable. Whatever is on the table at the end of the process is, in effect, offered to all members of both parties — David Owen included.

LIBERALS have an equivalent task to argue convincingly for liberal values. To do so is at least to work with the grain of the last 15 years of British political evolution. Since the decline of the British economy, partly as a result of worldwide changes, marked most dramatically by the oil crisis of 1978, it has not been possible to believe in painless steps to equality by creaming off a substantial surplus via taxation. Labour's Alternative Economic Strategy, vintage 1983, was the last attempt to make an intellectual case for salvation by growth as such. It was dropped so noiselessly thereafter that solicitous enquiries as to its fate are met with either a knowing smile or an embarrassed shuffling of feet.

Rather earlier than economic reality began its re-education of the Labour Party, Margaret Thatcher and the Centre for Policy Studies redirected the Conservative Party into monetarism and, in office after 1979, began to feed a new individualism, otherwise known as the old selfishness. George Bernard Shaw said that 'any government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always count on the support of Paul'. Subsequent election results suggest that this is sadly true. Personal gain is not, however, by any means the whole story. Why, for instance, did 24 per cent of the unemployed also vote Conservative on 11 June last? And why, despite its excellent presentation, did Labour fail to take a single percentage point off the Tories and only gained from the self-inflicted wounds of the Alliance?

> ***"First past the post" is the biggest single obstacle to a change in political alignment and a change in government***

My conclusion is that the image of collectivism is no longer electorally attractive and that even the selective individualism of neo-Conservatism has a surprising resonance. It is also seen negatively in the differential results of Liberal and SDP candidates. The average drop in vote for Liberal candidates between 1983 and 1987 was 2 percentage points, whereas it was 9.6 points for SDP candidates. It is also significant that the main burden of Labour authors even before the election was that socialism was certainly compatible with liberty. That has been emphasised almost obsessively in articles since 11 June, even if some, like Michael Meacher, seem not to accept that there is a permanent tension between them. It is the relative priority given to each which lies at the heart of the debate between the libertarian and collectivist left and which will now be part and parcel of the Liberal and SDP negotiations.

Any reassessment of the potential line-up against Thatcherism at the next election will wait on the eventual resolution of the current Alliance troubles and a reading of the subsequent opinion poll runes. It is crucial for the two parties to sort themselves out well before next May's municipal elections and, if Mrs Thatcher's banana skins are anything to go by, the electorate's memory is fortunately much shorter than it used to be. Labour shouldn't therefore take too much comfort from present Alliance embarrassment.

The ability of the Conservatives to retain an overall parliamentary majority of 100 with only 42 per cent of the poll, thanks to the electoral system and to the way the progressive vote divides, ought to lead all those horrified by its implications to discuss key issues. But it won't! The British tradition is for internal debate followed by declarations of infallibility and omnipotence. The electoral system feeds this view and is in turn fed by it. 'First past the post' is by far the biggest single obstacle to a change in political alignment and a change in government.

THUS FAR the discussion on realignment has concentrated on devising mechanistic solutions, just as the Alliance has tended to think too much about structures rather than values. There are too many adherents to the Paul Daniels School of Politics for my liking. There is a great danger in thinking that the public can be won by some sleight of vote. In the end political problems require a political solution. If the politicians do not appear prepared to go beyond slogans and slickness, why should the public abandon its cynicism?

Just in case anyone out there is listening, how about the following as a first stab at an agenda of the issues that divide Liberal and Labour parties?

- Economic determinism: Liberal values stem from a view of the individual and his or her relationship with the community and society generally. Economic structures must serve and accommodate that primary emphasis rather than the other way round.
- Pluralism: the Conservative government's systematic erosion of local government is matched by Labour's predilection in local government only to support voluntary bodies whose faces fit and to inhibit those it cannot control.
- Consensus on procedures: much of the antipathy towards 'hard left' councils stems from a confusion between means and ends. To force a desired policy on a sullen and reluctant public can often undermine its value.
- Corporatism: how far has Labour abandoned its touching faith in the state and in corporate planning?
- Devolution: how far does Labour believe in devolution as opposed to decentralisation?
- Internationalism: is Labour prepared to pool sovereignty? Its instinctive antipathy to the EEC suggests not and its attitude whenever jobs here need protecting against Third World imports, such as by the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, also suggests not.

I guess we could spend a happy hour or two running round these issues. And if there is a minute or two to spare we could go on to the organic links between the Labour Party and the trade unions! These are all serious issues. The sooner we start the better.

Michael Meadowcroft is Vice Chair of the Liberal Policy Committee: he was MP for Leeds West in the last parliament.

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The Doctor's shadow walks off stage left

DAVID MARQUAND *pricks*
David Owen's gigantic Ego

WHATEVER may be in doubt about the future of the Alliance, three things are now clear. In voting for merger with the Liberals, the SDP has repudiated David Owen's singular vision of social democracy, and of its place in British politics. In refusing to accept the will of the majority, Dr Owen and his closest lieutenants have embarked on a course which leads either to oblivion or to the Tory party. The bigger the rump they win to their cause, the smaller will be the chance of mobilising an anti-Conservative majority in the next general election.

By all the rules of politics, the separatists should have won. They decided the timing; they mounted a lavish advertising campaign; in their ranks were the party's trustees, most of its MPs and a majority of its National Committee; above all, they had at their head the dominating and charismatic figure of an admired leader. Given all this, the 57 per cent vote for merger was an extraordinary phenomenon — a mass revolt by the rank and file of a political party against its elites, with no precedent in British political history.

As significant as the size of the majority is the nature of the option which won the votes of the minority. Well before the votes were counted, the dirty little secret which had always lain at the heart of the anti-merger position came out into the open. Dr Owen and his closest supporters made it plain that they are separatists on principle: that their attitude to the Liberal Party is one of lordly contempt, tinged with paranoid suspicion; and that they had joined in an Alliance with the Liberals, not because they believed in it, but only because the exigencies of electoral arithmetic had given them no alternative.

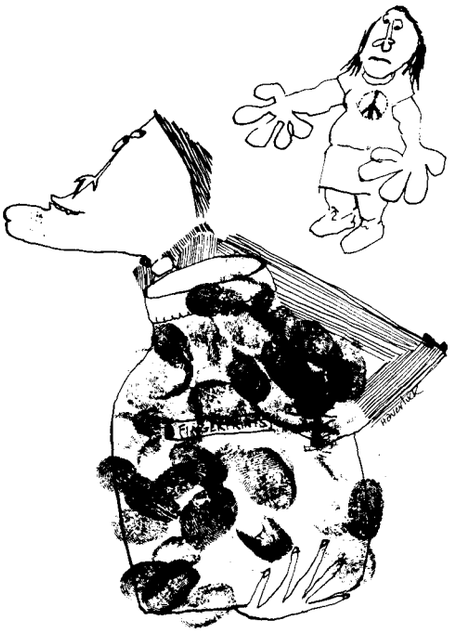
Though this became clear during the campaign, however, it was not clear at the start. The separatists set sail under false colours: only when battle was joined did they hoist the jolly roger. There was no openly separatist option on the ballot paper. The anti-merger option asked for closer links with the Liberals, short of merger. Many of those who voted for it did so, not because they were against merger on principle, but only because they thought the timing was wrong, or because they imagined that David Steel had tried to 'bounce' them, or because they did not believe that merger could be achieved on the terms which the unity campaigners proposed.

There can, in short, be no doubt what the party wants. A conclusive majority has voted for merger negotiations. Almost certainly, a sizeable proportion of the minority agrees with the majority on the principle. In a party built on one-member-one-vote, such an outcome might have been expected to end the argument — if not for ever, then certainly until the negotiations are over. Yet the separatists have refused to accept the verdict of their own ballot. To use H. N. Brailsford's famous phrase about Mussolini, they now appear like knights clad in shining blackmail, threatening to use their majority in the National Committee to frustrate the members' wishes if they are not allowed to separate on their own terms. The question is, why? What drives them? And where to?

The party c'est moi

The answers are rooted in the extraordinary, brilliant, tormented personality of David Owen. For the opposition to merger can be understood only as an emanation of his over-mastering Ego. It exists because he exists, and because he has taken the line he has; had he taken a different line it would long ago have disappeared. There may be a certain wistful charm in the notion that Mr Edward Lyons or Dr Dickson Mabon or Ms Sue Slipman or even Ms Rosie Barnes might have led a campaign against merger if he had been in favour of it, but it has no toehold in reality. So the question that matters is not what drives the anti-merger camp; for practical purposes, the anti-merger camp is merely an idea in the mind of its leader. The question is what drives him.

One possible answer is ambition; and it is true that no one gets as far as David Owen has done without being ambitious. But what one might call conventional ambition — the calculating, rationally-based ambition which is common to most successful politicians — would have pointed towards merger, not away from it. Not long after the 1983 election, I told him I thought he could be the leader of a merged party if he wanted. I still think I was right: more importantly, I also suspect he thought I was right. And whatever may have been true in 1983, there is no doubt at all that the stand he has taken in 1987 is more likely to lead to a Powellite isolation than to power or even influence.



The police take Mary's fingerprints and refuse to give them back

> ***Owen has an extraordinary obsession with political masculinity***

Another possible answer — his own, and that of his admirers in the Tory press — is that he is driven by political principle: by a commitment to social democracy, or to the social market, or to four-party politics. Unfortunately, most of these supposed principles do not support the conclusions which he has drawn from them, while those that do are not principles. If social democracy means a doctrine like those of the social-democratic parties of Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, then there is no sense in which David Owen is a better social democrat than Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, William Rodgers or, for that matter, David Steel. If it means something else, then the something else is impenetrably obscure.

The same is true of the social market. If this is more than a fashionable code-word for Thatcherism, it presumably means a mixture of market forces and state intervention of the sort advocated in the 12 points which the SDP issued at its launch. But that has been part of the stock in trade of the Liberal Party since the Yellow Book of 1928. As for four-party politics, no serious person could make that an end in itself — unless, perhaps, there is an unspoken caveat about the nature of the fourth party.

And here, of course, is the key. David Owen is not a social democrat: he is an Owenite. In spite of his extraordinary capacity to pick up the latest political ideas and run with them, in spite, for that matter, of his marvellous command of the details of policy, there is no evidence that he has a coherent, thought-out philosophy. What he has are demonic energy, a quick intelligence, enormously powerful instincts and a driving Will. What he craves — what he must have in order to cope with the tensions which have aged him ten years in the last five — is the psychic space in which to follow that Will wherever it may take him. ▷

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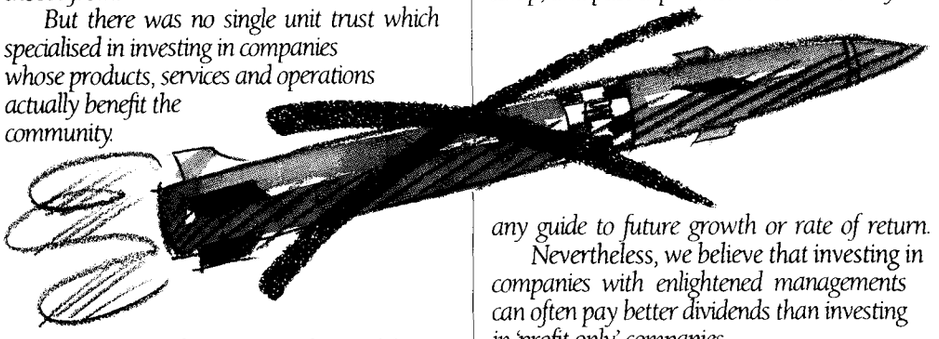

Not surprisingly, many people opted for putting their money into building societies or bank deposit accounts.

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By carefully selecting and monitoring the companies in which we invest, The Stewardship Unit Trust has successfully bridged the gap between financial gain and social obligation.

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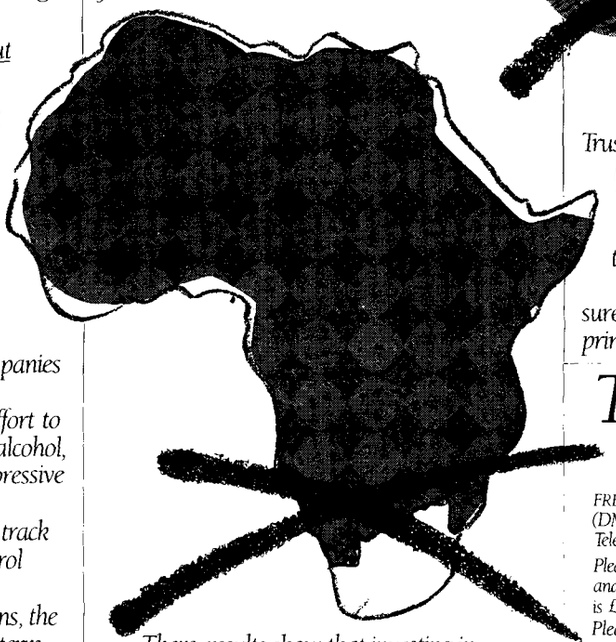

There, results show that investing in "socially concerned" companies, both large and small, often gives a better return than investing in the general market.

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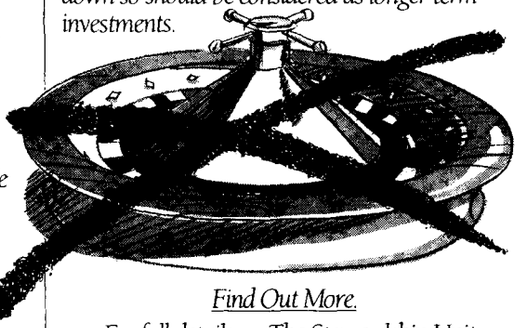

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His shadow says no

Unlike Powell, however — but like the other obvious parallel, Oswald Mosley — he cannot operate entirely alone. He needs a sounding board, a vehicle, an instrument. In his eyes, that is what the SDP is and always has been. Its destiny is to be the violin to his Paganini: the Old Guard to his Napoleon. As he half-admitted to me when I tried to persuade him that he could be the leader of a merged party if he tried, the first and chief reason why he does not want merger is that he knows that a merged party would be less malleable: that even if he led it, it would not be an extension of his personality in the way that the SDP looked likely to be. That is why he cannot accept defeat in the merger ballot now, any more than he could accept defeat in the leadership ballot five years ago: how can one be repudiated by one's shadow?

This leads on to his second reason for opposing merger. Though he has no coherent philosophy, there is a certain pattern to his instincts. Three themes weave through the 21 years of his parliamentary career. One is a genuine, though somewhat *de haut en bas*, concern for the unfortunate — the theme which took him into medicine in the first place, and then into the Labour Party. The second is a deep, old-fashioned, Plymouth-dockyard English nationalism — the theme which explains his lukewarm Europeanism as Foreign Secretary and his nuclear fixations in the last two years. The third, and increasingly the most important, is an extraordinary obsession with political masculinity: a contempt for compromise and compromisers; a loathing for the slow, elaborate processes of consensus-building, and an even greater loathing for those who engage in them; a yearning for 'hard', 'tough' solutions.

Against that background, the anguished confusion of the last few weeks falls into place. Whatever else the Liberals may be, they are *liberals*. Whatever else David Owen is, he is profoundly, instinctively illiberal. Small 'l' liberals are the people whose nerve always cracks; the fudgers and mudgers who run away from tough decisions; the wets and wimps who are better left at home when the strong man goes tiger-shooting. And what applies to all liberals applies especially to the faint-hearts and back-sliders in the SDP who want to join the big 'L' Liberals in a new party. Better the wilderness than continued truckling to these.

The trouble, of course, is that it is easier to get into the wilderness than out of it. Heroic self-immolation may have its charms at the moment of crisis, when the blood is up. It will be more difficult to live with the consequences when the adrenalin level has returned to normal, when the television invitations threaten to dry up and the political company of Mr Cartwright and Ms Barnes begins to pall. David Owen is not a Conservative; and I am sure that, at this moment, he has no intention of becoming a Conservative. The fact remains that an Owenite rump party could move only to the right; that the Conservatives would be insane not to want him aboard; and that political logic of that sort has a way of triumphing over the strongest will. □

Professor David Marquand is a member of the SDP National Committee and was Labour MP for Ashfield 1966-77.

PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

Whitehall, subversion & the McCarthy question

Peter Hennessy

A COMBINATION of factors has caused me to think again about an aspect of post-war history that has long intrigued me: why and how was it that Britain avoided McCarthyism in the late 1940s and early 1950s? Watching Emile de Antonio's brilliant documentary, *Point of Order*, about the Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954 was one stimulus (McCarthy was the Ollie North of his day in terms of viewer power: he had an audience of more than 2 million for six weeks, a stupendous figure for those days; Colonel North pulled 55 million for less than a week).

> ***'Westminster makes life tough for those who hanker for select committees'***

Another element was the 30th anniversary of McCarthy's death and the rereading of two classic studies from the '50s, one published shortly before the bruiser's liquor-blasted liver gave out, the other shortly after. Edward Shils' 1956 study, *The Torment of Secrecy*, remains the best work ever written on the dilemmas of disclosure and confidentiality, counter-espionage and liberty in an open society. Richard Rovere's *Senator Joe McCarthy* of 1959 has the best opening paragraph of any biography I have read:

> The late Joseph R. McCarthy, a United States Senator from Wisconsin, was in many ways the most gifted demagogue ever bred on these shores. No bolder seditionist ever moved among us — nor any politician with a surer, swifter access to the dark places of the American mind.

The final stimulus has been the Peter Wright allegations of profound and persistent Soviet subversion in high places, and with it the kind of belated naming of names which did not happen here in the 1950s. Wright and those fellow MI5 officers he claims wished to bring down Harold Wilson in the mid-'70s are very reminiscent, too, of the 'Loyal Underground', as they used to call themselves — officials in the federal bureaucracy and officers in Army intelligence who passed material secretly to McCarthy for use in his disgracefully-run Senate Committee on Government Operations.

AT FIRST SIGHT Britain should have been ripe for such assaults in the early 1950s — a rash of convicted spies in Alan Nunn May and Klaus Fuchs, a pair of defecting diplomats in Burgess and Maclean, a seepage of military force relative to the superpowers, the trickle of a melting Empire about to become a flood and, to cap it all, Sir Waldron Smithers MP rising once a year to ask Mr Attlee or, after 1951, Mr Churchill to set up a Selected Committee on Un-British Activities.

Here lies the beginning of the answer on the immunity of the British system of government to the McCarthy virus. Smithers, like McCarthy, cut a ludicrous figure. But, unlike Washington, Westminster makes life tough for those who hanker for a select committee into this or that. As Roy Jenkins noted in an essay on McCarthy, Capitol Hill 'proliferates committees and sub-committees. Once launched they have a largely uncontrolled life of their own.' Party discipline on this and other matters invariably held in parliament. Hugh Gaitskell always blamed McCarthyism on lax party discipline in the Congress and Eisenhower's initial reluctance to fight him.

Attlee and Churchill, by contrast, always greeted Smithers' pursuit of an Un-British Activities Committee with a 'No, Sir' at Question Time. Churchill actually included an anti-McCarthy passage in the Queen's coronation night broadcast in 1953. The political and administrative élite never lost control of Britain's post-war security operation. The running was always made in Whitehall, not Westminster. Though it was post-Fuchs pressure from the United States (whose atomic information British governments were desperate once more to share) which forced Whitehall to tighten up its flimsy 'purge procedure' into the more vigorous 'positive vetting'. Security never became an election issue here as it was in America from 1948-54.

The huge difference between the two countries' purges is apparent from the figures. In the United States since 1945, security drives led to the sacking of 9,500 federal civil servants. A further 15,000 resigned while under investigation for suspected communist affiliations. All were named. Since the adoption of the 'purge procecure' by the Attlee government in 1948, 25 British officials have been dismissed for security reasons, 25 resigned, 88 were transferred to non-sensitive work and 33 people were reinstated. A 'no martyrs' policy operated throughout and none were named.

The hard men in the 'loyal British underground' may say these statistics merely show how hopelessly soft and liberal we were and explain our vulnerability to penetration. There are two ways of interpreting anything. Would, I wonder, matters remain the same if 1980s Britain faced a rash of spy scandals and the running was made by a skilled and unscrupulous demagogue at Westminster? Would the system crush him or abet him? I think it would keep the wraps on successfully enough. As we have seen this year, it's proved impossible for parliament to enforce an inquiry into allegations of *right-wing* subversion in MI5. The same would probably apply to a left-wing equivalent. Mind you, in an era when the views of the Church of England on the inner cities can be regarded as 'marxist' anything is possible! □

Peter Hennessy is a Visiting Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute.

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ECONOMICS

Roll up that Niglet boomlet

Austin Mitchell

ROLL UP that Nigel boomlet. He'll not be needing it these four years. The election is over, but the bad economic news which was held back for it certainly flooded out last week. The disastrous degeneration in our trade and the sudden rise in interest rates guarantee that the brief party is over. Just when he should be seizing the oil-given opportunity to turn half-cock into real growth, election myth into economic reality, the Chancellor has reverted to norm, and condemned us to another dose of the downhill ride.

Physical overheating — industry producing at full capacity — might be an acceptable reason for this (see the demolition of this notion in last week's Economics column). In fact the problems are all monetary. Because Nigel Lawson has no way of dealing with these he is aborting the pathetic economic expansion before it has got anywhere near our real problems; bringing down unemployment and putting the resources made desolate over the last eight years back to work. That needs a boost in growth to the 4 per cent which halved unemployment in six years in the 1930s or even the 6 per cent which did the same after Ted Heath's million. It needed a massive boost to investment, expanding to regain lost ground and growing through balance of payments constraints, which is, after all, why God provided the oil. In fact companies have eaten each other and the country has gobbled the seed corn. In the public sector, housing, the infrastructure and our shabby social capital have all been allowed to degenerate. In the private sector, for every £100 of depreciation (the loss of value of capital assets over time) we have reinvested only £85 over the last six years, a disinvestment which makes us the world's first undeveloping country.

If we were running the real, productive economy too fast, requiring a dose of deflation (higher interest rates), we'd have sucked in raw materials. In fact volume of imports of basic materials was only 21 per cent higher in May than in 1980, compared to, say, chemicals, up 116 per cent at the expense of jobs here. Britain's boost is not in investment but in manufactured imports. The profits are going not into production but into acquisition and takeover. Growth looks good only because of the oil, squandered to finance imports of manufactured goods to destroy jobs here, and because the performance of other countries, particularly those in an EEC which has become the deflationary black-spot of the world, is so bad that we look virtuous by contrast.

The 'overheating' is purely monetary and Britain faces not so much the problems of real growth as of a credit explosion. Bank lending to the private sector went up £3.9 billion in June alone, the high end of a long build-up towards the election. Such a credit explosion, channelled not through the state which can put it into productive investment, but through the banks who pass it to the highest bidder, flows inevitably into consumption, sucking in imports, into takeovers and into asset inflation. This affects the stock market, where government fuels the fury by privatisation, and the property and housing markets. There it turns the North into a wetback economy, supplying all kinds of services to the South, from Monica Coghlan to Liverpool labourers dossing in the houses they're doing up.

All this strangles the faltering growth in the real economy. Interest rates are kept substantially higher than those of competitors. Yet the Bank of England dares not reduce them for fear of stoking asset inflation (especially house prices) to ever more insane heights. So it opts for still higher rates, a futile exercise which checks industrial investment, already too weak, but does not choke off consumer demand which is much stronger. Credit to people, as distinct from industry, goes into houses and shares. As long as they continue to rise in value, this provides the leverage to borrow more. Much of that borrowing will then go into buying even more imports. Our advanced industrial competitors with massive, and highly invested, internationally-traded sectors, can hold prices to keep markets. Our industry can't. Between 1985 and May 1987, though the pound fell, import unit values of manufactures went up only 5.7 per cent, compared to 10.0 per cent for input and 8.8 per cent for output prices of UK manufactures.

> ***'Instead of using North Sea oil to expand and grow, this government has gone back to the Stop-Go policies of the 1950s'***

Interest rates should fall to stem the inflow of foreign currency which is pushing the pound up. Instead, the Bank pushes rates up, brings in more money, and keeps the pound higher, compounding the longstanding effects of oil and guaranteeing that the exchange rate is always substantially higher than the real, productive economy requires. This exacerbates the key weakness of the British economy — lack of competitiveness — and kills the goose that laid so many golden eggs. Though it never came down to the real levels of 1976, and though Nigel Lawson resisted the fall all the way, the pound did come down between 1982 and this year. Government benefited by increased profits, more corporation tax allowing tax cuts and economic buoyancy.

The need was to take that process further, to encourage timid and battered British capitalism back into areas of production of import substitution and markets it had abandoned. Instead, the Chancellor set out to reverse the fall. He has kept sterling in the DM 2.90-3.00 band, as if we were in the European Monetary System without actually joining. Now he has pushed up interest rates. The consequences will be disastrous. Pundits and commentators have a phallic fetish for the pound; proud when it's hard, filled with post-imperial *tristesse* when it's soft. They forget the real, as distinct from the nominal, exchange rate. Our inflation rate is higher than that of our competitors. So, for every day that the pound is held up, the real exchange rates appreciates. We become less competitive. Even before interest rates went up, real appreciation was 12 per cent against the dollar since last November, 7 per cent against the Deutschmark since last February.

HERE IS the engine of destruction which produced such disastrous results from 1978 to 1982. It is back in business. The decline in competitiveness comes through quickly in order books, six months to a year later in the trade figures. As a result of real appreciation, the price of imports has fallen by 3 per cent, that of exports has risen by 3 per cent. The ratio of export to import prices (the 'terms of trade') rose to 104, equal to the worst ever figure, and a deterioration of 30 per cent since 1974. Here is the major reason why the balance of payments is going disastrously wrong. The sharp rise in the volume of finished manufactures, following the fall in the pound, has come to an end. The volume of imports of finished manufactures is 14 per cent up on a year ago. There is worse in the pipeline. The share of our finished manufactures going to the US, only 10 per cent in 1979, was 18 per cent in 1986, but certain to be hit as the dollar falls. Now the Chancellor has compounded all that. The situation will get worse, deflation will be enthroned; we are back in the Crippsian corset.

North Sea Oil has banished, temporarily, the more acute difficulties of the '70s. Instead of using it to expand and grow, this government has gone back to the Stop-Go policies of the 1950s and we are entering the Stop phase, after a brief burst of Go. What overvaluation has taken away, only competitiveness can restore.

Doing this would be using market forces. The Chancellor has damned them. He prefers finance to industry with all its messy problems. He can't cope with supply-side overheating. He will not manage credit to apply the increase in money supply beneficially. He no longer believes that an increase in money supply creates inflation; he now assumes that channelling it through the banks is good, only channelling it through the state means inflation. So the techniques used to stimulate the economy in the 1930s by pumping out Treasury Bills to finance investment are banned today, and Lawson will not use differential reserve ratios which would require the banks to finance industrial investment rather than asset inflation. Trapped by his own prejudices, he has allowed a monetary frenzy which does little to restore the economic damage and is now attempting to restrain that by clobbering the industry which suffered so much in the first place.

R.I.P. the Boomlet. Dying, though the symptoms live on. We are now marching backwards into a milder version of the 1979-1982 overvaluation, but this time with a payments problem. The pound should come down to solve that; the government won't let it for fear of inflation. We are up a lavatorial creek and six years nearer the nemesis of the 1990s. Then, with oil falling away, we must pay our way and provide jobs through the manufacturing sector. Instead of using the fleeting oil opportunity to prepare us for it we are back to the old tactic of bashing industry. Not just a bad Chancellor. More a total waste of time. □

Austin Mitchell MP is an Opposition spokesperson on trade and industry.

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The third world force

DILIP HIRO *reveals the real struggle in the Gulf*

THERE IS no shortage of explanations offered for the current American naval build-up in the Persian Gulf:

- The United States wishes to guarantee free passage to neutral shipping in the Gulf, an international waterway;
- Washington wishes to make amends with pro-Western Arab monarchies for its secret arms deals with Iran by supplying escorts for the reflagged Kuwaiti tankers;
- The moves are part of a design to provoke Tehran to take direct action against American ships, thus providing Washington with an excuse to knock out important Iranian military and/or economic targets;
- Caspar Weinberger, US defence secretary, is reportedly intent on avenging the deaths of 259 American marines in Beirut as a result of the truck bombing carried out by a pro-Iranian group in October 1983;
- The exercise is to implement the long-held US strategy of keeping the Soviets out of this region.

And so on.

While some or all of these explanations have some validity, the single most important and basic reason is being ignored altogether. *It is Western access to oil in the Gulf, and continued Western influence over the rate of extraction and pricing of Gulf oil.*

The present balance of forces in the Iran-Iraq war points unmistakably towards Iranian victory. Were this to happen, the hegemony that the West has enjoyed in the region since oil was discovered in Iran 80 years ago would be destroyed. America, the leader of the West, understands this, and is deeply worried. Its rapid military build-up in the Gulf is a means by which it is trying to divert Iranian military effort away from land battles with Iraq and thus deprive Tehran of its victory.

Under Western eyes

Those who criticise the current American stance on the ground that the US receives only a small percentage of its oil imports from the Gulf miss the main point. The US regards itself as the guardian of overall Western military and economic interests, and therefore considers any action taken to safeguard these as legitimate and rational.

America has all along been very clear on the subject. According to the 1975 report of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US has pursued three foreign policy objectives after World War II: to provide a steady supply of oil to West Europe and Japan at 'reasonable prices'; to maintain 'stable governments' in the non-Communist, pro-Western oil exporting countries; and to ensure that 'American-based firms be a dominant force in world oil trade'. The Committee concluded that these goals were 'generally attained during the 1950s and 1960s'. It is worth noting that in the 1960s the oil output in the Gulf amounted to 30 per cent of the world total: in the 1930s it was a mere five per cent.

The petroleum price explosion of the mid-1970s made little difference to the relations between the oil-rich Gulf states and the West. In fact, the expenditure of the astronomical sums earned by these countries from oil exports on the civilian and military contracts awarded to Western companies led to the deepening and broadening of their economic, military and diplomatic links with the West, particularly America.

For 24 years Sheikh Ahmad Yamani, petroleum minister of Saudi Arabia, which possesses a quarter of the world's known oil reserves, put the interests of the West above those of the producing countries. Finally, even the Saudi king found Yamani's pro-Americanism too much to bear, and sacked him last October.

> ***'The single most important reason for the American naval build-up in the Gulf is Western access to oil'***

The West has much to worry about. The Gulf region has 55 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves. Three-quarters of the 70 million people living in the area — Iran, Iraq and the six members of the Gulf Co-operation Council — are Shia, and thus prone to following Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as their religious and political leader. All of the Saudi oil is in its eastern province bordering the Gulf where a majority of the indigenous population is Shia. On present trends, by 1995 between 30 and 45 per cent of the oil needs of the West will be met by the oilfields of the Gulf.

Islam — the Third Way

Washington grasped the gravity of the situation several years ago. Along with London and Paris it encouraged the pro-West monarchies to form the Gulf Co-operation Council. In early 1981 Frank Carlucci, then US deputy defence secretary, asked NATO allies to 'station troops in the Gulf', and secured the immediate support of the British defence undersecretary. Margaret Thatcher backed the idea of a multinational Rapid Deployment Force. 'There is an urgent need for a new defence policy beyond the North Atlantic,' she said.

So far the Western plans have remained unfulfilled. However pro-Western Gulf monarchies may be, they are unwilling to lease land bases to non-Islamic powers. After all, Gulf rulers claim to derive their legitimacy on the basis of Islam. Allowing non-Islamic states to use their soil for confronting, militarily, the Islamic Republic of Iran would irreparably damage their standing among their subjects.

At the centre of Iran's policies, domestic or foreign, is Islam. Iranian leaders have demonstrated that by implementing an Islamic revolution they have ousted a corrupt ruling elite, freed the country from the domination of a superpower, America, and reclaimed its national independence. What Iran has shown the rest of the 45-member Islamic Conference Organisation is the Third Way of Islam, an indigenous ideology. The viability of Islam as a vigorous, revolutionary political ideology has been established.

What Iran wishes to do next is to give economic underpinning to Islamic ideology on a global scale. Hence the extreme importance it attaches to the outcome of its conflict with Iraq, ruled by the secular socialist Baathist Party. Tehran knows that its victory in the Gulf War would result in a pro-Iranian regime in Baghdad, with the country's Shia majority ascendant in the portals of power for the first time in Iraqi history.

Whether Gulf monarchies would then be overthrown by republican Islamic forces is an open question. Iran would certainly exert pressure, overt and covert, on the Gulf rulers to fall in line with the Quranic/Koranic injunction about consulting the community in the running of the state, and install a representative government at home.

A paper tiger

Islamic Iran would also impress on the Gulf rulers its viewpoint about oil in the Gulf. God has been bountiful toward Muslims by bestowing them with this precious resource in such abundance, it would argue. It behoved Islamic rulers to co-operate in exploiting this 'Muslim resource' in such a manner as to maximise benefits to the masses, and transform the region into a hub of industry and advanced technology with the surplus earned by oil exports. Iran would successfully insist on restricting output in order to secure the maximum price for oil: a prospect much dreaded by Western governments.

In other words, Iran would offer to its Muslim neighbours a blueprint of an Islamic Common Market on the lines of the European Economic Community. This would be presented as the first stage of a wider plan to draw all Muslim countries into a single economic network rivalling the socialist Comecon and the capitalist EEC, US and Japan.

Thus the stakes in the current Gulf conflict are high; and, in the final analysis, these are economic. It is not accidental that Khomeini routinely describes America as 'a world predator'.

It is worth remembering that the US is not against Islamic fundamentalism *per se*. Indeed America has always considered religion as a powerful tool in combating Marxism, and used it as such. Washington has been vigorously backing Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan. It has been in league with Saudi Arabia which has been a fundamentalist state since its inception in 1932. What the US cannot tolerate is the use of religious, or any other, ideology to subvert its political, military and economic domination of the richest and a most strategic region in the world.

Since neither America nor Iran is likely to change its tack there can be no reconciliation, or even an understanding, between them. Iran is set to pursue its immediate aim of securing the American naval withdrawal from the Gulf and prove to the rest of the Muslim world that the US is after all 'a paper tiger'. This exercise is designed to infuse Muslim masses with confidence in their struggle to become the masters of their political destiny and economic resources. □

Dilip Hiro is a London-based journalist and author, whose latest book is Iran Under the Ayatollahs.

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SAUDI ARABIA

Proud, patriotic and paranoid

RONNIE MUTCH, *recently in Saudi Arabia, says that royal rule feels fragile*

THE FIRST thing that strikes one on flying into Riyadh is the opulence. What other airport in the world is made of genuine marble, has half-inch woollen pile carpets, truly-awe inspiring illuminated fountains and large airy spaces? All this in the ordinary arrivals hall.

The feeling of opulence does not change with time. Like some latter-day Romans, obsessively defying the sumptuary laws, the Saudis dress uniformly and simply, in robes and head dress. The rest of their possessions, however, are *not* simple. Their buildings are extravagant edifices — marble, chrome; space and grace. On the roads, cars; new and shiny, with the odd day-glo Mercedes limousine thrown in for good, bad taste.

Saudi Arabia is the honeypot in the Middle East, the petro dollars attracting workers and others from all over the world. I was at the 'Intercontinental Hotel' in Riyadh, truly one of the most luxurious in the world, idling next to the swimming pool. After a while the sun, the dazzling (cooled) swimming pool and the iced fresh orange juice palled. I surveyed my fellow bathers. All Western, young, slim, tanned, purposeful: not a physical degenerate among them. Careful investigation proved my suspicions — they were all military or ex-military, British, French, Swedish and very circumspect about their present occupations. Only arms dealers could afford this lifestyle, one confided.

Most other expatriates tend to be less fortunate. There are no readily available statistics on the number of foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, but it is generally agreed that they equal, if not exceed, the native Saudi population. Roads are built, people nursed, things carried, rubbish cleared — indeed, all 'menial' work is done by expatriates. The top echelons, however, are all Saudi. If a Saudi is not in a managerial position he feels himself to be one of the nation's deprived.

A digression: in this article, the Saudis about whom I write will be men, for the simple reason that no non-Saudi has any but the smallest contact with any women. Consorting with an unmarried woman is a floggable, deportable offence. I only ever spoke to one Saudi woman — *over the phone in the next room*. She preferred not to meet me face to face: and she was a professor. All Saudi women vanish behind thick black clothes, veils and high walls after adolescence. (Some nurses, Western and Filipino, can occasionally be seen.)

Bad news swears

Of all the Western expatriates, the most visible are the Americans. Despite their jeans, T-shirts and louche attitude, they are almost all part of the United States military presence, or advisers as they prefer to be known. The reason they are there is self-evident. Saudi Arabia has the world's largest proven resources of oil. Western technological society needs oil like an addict needs a fix.

King Fahad is virulently anti-communist, giving some millions of dollars in 'aid' to various right-wing wars all over the world. When I was in Saudi, the King who was in part employing me was also paying in part for the bombs that were being dropped on my beloved daughter, who was engaged in a project in Nicaragua's war zone.

The political scene in the Middle East has been volatile since the creation of the State of Israel (always referred to as 'the enemy' in the Saudi press). America has, out of self-interest on the one hand and emotional commitment on the other, always supported both antagonists. As a lanky colonel remarked to me, 'You know these guys are just itching to go to war with Israel; trouble is the motherfuckers wouldn't last five minutes against them. I know, I've been on both sides.'

A few weeks later there was an incident which quickly blew into a full-scale diplomatic crisis and which could only happen in Saudi Arabia. Another American explained: 'One of our officers, er men, called a Saudi a motherfucker. This guy wrote to the Minister of Defence personally, saying that his family were insulted and defiled and in the end they wanted to make an example of the guy by flogging him publicly. I explained that you can't do that to an American officer, besides it's a common expression. Trouble was that he called him that in Arabic. Bad news to swear at Saudis in Arabic. We got him out quietly.'

Sudden riches

Part of the Saudi touchiness, some would call it paranoia, is undoubtedly allied with the fact that the nation is young. It came into existence round the turn of the century, as a dirt-poor Arab state, with no visible resources or industries. Most of its income was derived from pilgrims coming to worship in the holy city of Mecca. Kim Philby's father, a close confidant of the then King, helped negotiate the sale of the oil rights to the Americans. (It should be added, parenthetically, that the British were totally uninterested in these rights at the time, and let them go by default.)

Even after the discovery of oil in the '30s, prosperity was not rapid. There was slow growth until the '70s and then Arab-Israeli war, and the resulting oil-embargo, sent oil prices sky high, enriching the Saudis beyond their wildest dreams.

Saudis have been characterised as intensely 'proud, patriotic, and paranoid'. Given a young nation with a lot of money, no means of political expression and a lot of envious neighbours, this is hardly surprising. Within a lifetime, poverty has disappeared, but not the potent memories of humiliations that many had to endure.

Allied with this is a political system that comes straight out of the Middle Ages. Or rather lack of political system, since it is a feudal monarchy with no elected representatives whatsoever. Close relatives of the King fill all Ministries, except Oil. It must also be said that the King is visibly fully occupied (via TV) and also often visibly bored (by protocol). He has literally the power of life or death over his subjects. Imagine Henry VIII with every modern high-tech artefact at his disposal (he would also have approved of being allowed four wives by Islamic law). Beheadings are still held publicly in the major cities every Friday.

It was near Medina, in one of the few poor villages, almost a shanty town, that I realised what the King's wealth meant. In a dirty, dusty lane I looked up and there in the distance, on a mountain, was the King's palace. The entire top of the mountain had been sliced off and a modern structure, certainly larger than Buckingham Palace and environs, had been superimposed on the man-made plateau. What did the inhabitants of the village think, I wondered, whenever they looked up at all that luxury? Moreover, how long would this fragile state last?

Change through Islam

There is no one answer to this question — posed sharply now, by the call from Islam for the overthrow of the Saudi royal family. But here are some pointers to an answer.

The average Saudi is cosseted. For all its capitalist ideology, Saudi Arabia has one of the best organised welfare states going. Free medical care, free schooling, free, indeed paid, university places (higher grants for scientists), an interest-free loan of £30,000 for 30 years and a plot of land when a Saudi marries. (He is also constrained by law to marry a Saudi woman.)

Islam stands in place of a political system. How much religion should I put in a film, I asked, when I first arrived. There was a sticky silence. 'Ah,' said one Saudi softly, 'that is a serious political question.'

The Islamic religion is an all-pervasive fundamentalist certainty; none of our doubts. No other religion is allowed and everyone prays, devoutly and without embarrassment at least four times a day. At prayer times all shops close and all activity ceases. Outside a closed supermarket I met an angry Swiss engineer: 'Do you know how many man hours a day they waste because of this?' He took out his calculator: 'One and a quarter million man hours a day,' he said.

We in the West have minimised the trauma felt by Muslims in general, and Saudis in particular, over the recent disturbances in Mecca. What has not been said is that traditionally, after the religious ceremony is over in the Mosque, anyone can take the floor to expound on some pressing problem. This was clearly what the Iranians were counting on. That it ended in bloodshed is as traumatic as, for instance, the Italian police killing 200 English Catholics in St Peters Square after the Pope finished Easter Mass.

The system *feels* fragile; we are, after all, not talking about an all-encompassing political/governmental system with deep roots, but an extremely technologically advanced state, held together by one man, the King. As far as can be judged (the sycophancy makes it difficult) he is well liked and highly thought of by the average Saudi. Change, if it arrives, is unlikely to come by some mass dissatisfaction with the political system, for there is none visible. Change will have a religious impetus, as in Iran.

The power of Islam can be terrifying. The King treats this one all-powerful institution with its own religious police (Mutawas) with care and circumspection. Given the current beliefs and passions, any change is not likely to be in the direction of liberality. □

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Revolution by other means

Hounded from her lectureship for her Communism, falsely imprisoned for 16 months and facing a death penalty, **ANGELA DAVIS** *first became a symbol of black resistance in the early '70s. A charismatic speaker, she is still a powerful source of inspiration. In an exclusive interview with* **DIANE ABBOTT** *she discusses patriotism, coalitions and hope*

Sheila Gray/Format

Suzanne Roden/Format

Angela Davis: 'Black people have a right to talk about love for a country we have built with our sweat and our blood'. Diane Abbott (inset): 'You're wary of the term feminist?'

Diane Abbott: You are one of the symbols of black revolutionary politics of the '60s. There was a point in the early '70s when people felt a revolution was imminent. How does that now feel?

Angela Davis: In the '60s the black movement was very militant and dramatic, the student movement had reached its height, the anti-Vietnam war movement was very visible — it was enormously exciting, it brought large numbers of people into the movement. But there were mistakes made, there was a great deal of confusion. Some people who were active, including some leading figures, were not able to learn from the lessons that were forged by that time and have dropped out of the movement. It's important to point out that there is an essential continuity between then and what's happening today. Some leading members of the movement became turncoats, in effect — Eldridge Cleaver for one is a staunch reactionary, others have gone into non-political areas but others of us have remained and have tried to glean lessons.

One of the real problems with that era was that there were a number of separate movements which had not realised their connectedness with each other. The black movement was very separate from, say, the women's movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement. I remember the first year I taught at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1969-70 when there were massive anti-Vietnam war demonstrations: the white students who were anti-Vietnam would do nothing when we attempted to mobilise them around the Soledad brothers. 10-15,000 students demonstrated within a couple of days of Nixon ordering the invasion of Cambodia. A week later we tried to organise a demonstration for the Soledad brothers, and Bobby Seale and members of the Black Panther party and we only got 100 students and most of them were black . . .

DA: But what about popular consciousness?

AD: This is a period when political consciousness is much more acute than it was at the time . . . there's a greater understanding of the interconnections between struggles, even though there may be less activism.

DA: So why did the US give Reagan another term?

AD: The overwhelming majority of black people voted against him both times — 90 per cent of the black electorate in the last election. In the 1984 campaign Reagan began to represent himself as a man who would guarantee peace . . . he actually convinced people that he represented the opposite of his policies. In some places where there were strong local progressive initiatives being supported, Reagan also won. Take the Iran-*contra* hearings and Oliver North's popularity: polls in the *New York Times* have found that the majority of people actually disagree with what North stood for. But they identify with him because of his so-called patriotism.

This is something we progressives have to deal with. Black people have a right to talk about love for a country we have built with our sweat and our blood. But we have not formulated a way to talk in

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a progressive way about a person's love for their country. The black people of South Africa have no problem in talking about their love for a country, despite its racist, fascist regime.

DA: To return to black revolutionary politics — from the high water-mark, which coincided with the campaign to get you released and the Black Panthers, if you read *Ebony* you'd think that black people in America are now into materialism and straightening their hair . . .

AD: There have been some backward trends, but if you look at the history of black liberation movements in the country, in the '20s there was a great deal of racial consciousness, a sense of connection with Africa. Marcus Garvey brought to masses of people in urban areas a pride about being black. Yet by the time the '60s came, no one remembered that someone had once said black is beautiful. But even if we didn't remember, we were operating within that historical continuum and I think that when one examines the dynamics of mass movements, they never progress smoothly from one step, to a higher one and next higher one. This has been a period of reflection and understanding that there are some new channels within which we can focus our energy, including the electoral channel. It's extremely important that we now have progressive black candidates: Jesse Jackson is now a front running candidate and that says a lot about black movements . . .

DA: So you don't think electoral politics is a waste of time?

AD: No, I think the work of the '50s, '60s and '70s is now seeing fruits with progressive black candidates: the Congressional Black Caucus is the most progressive body in Congress . . . of course we also have only one black woman in Congress, too — we don't have enough elected women, but there are locally elected black women officials.

DA: When we in this country try to organise as black people within the Labour Party or trade union movement we are accused of being diversionary and in some ways reactionary and detracting from a pure class position.

AD: I think there's some serious problems in the left in Britain. In the Communist Party in America we have always talked about how black workers have played a leading role in the working class — and that white workers cannot move forward in class consciousness if they don't understand the role they have to play in the struggle against racism — so there is no contradiction in talking about black people organising as black people.

DA: In this country any mention of a black caucus has met with a hysterical reaction. The Labour Party in general says that black concerns are fringe issues: but what worries black people is the role of the state, the police, the delivery of services — education, housing . . . What's your experience of coalition politics?

AD: We're in an exciting and difficult phase — difficult because that's the nature of coalitions. The Rainbow Coalition formed round Jesse Jackson's candidacy demonstrated the possibility of bringing people together: racially oppressed people which included not only black but Chicanos, Asians, native American Indians; the women's movement; the gay movement; disabled people. At the beginning the weakest link was the involvement of the labour movement, but now it is very much involved.

DA: So do you think Rainbow Coalition embraces the politics of the future?

AD: I have some disagreement with Jesse Jackson, though I think he's willing to learn — from his relationship with the women's movement he has changed his attitude to abortion and now supports the right to choose.

DA: The left in Britain is very much opposed to coalition politics, seeing it in opposition to politics based on a programme and ideology, saying it is a ragbag of people, sneering at lesbians and black people working together, seeing it as messy and in opposition to a politics based on class.

AD: I would argue that the real hope of electoral politics in the US would be the creation of a new party, a coalition party based on principles which would have to be grounded in an understanding of the role of the monopoly corporations: it's possible to build a coalition of people with diverse interests but who can agree on the sources of the various problems we are trying to solve.

DA: How come the best the Democratic Party can do nowadays is Gary Hart?

AD: The Democratic Party is very confused! A bill recently passed the House of Representatives which would prevent the African National Congress from travelling and meeting people: it got a lot of support from the Democrats. There are progressive pockets within the Democratic Party but many others come from the South, from slave country. Other Democrats are associated with the corporate structure. The platform for the Mondale-Ferraro ticket didn't even have a strong position on jobs . . . at the 1984 Democratic Convention the only radical ideas were coming from Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition . . . that's why I say we have to move outside the Democrats and build a new party. It would attract members of the Black Caucus, and other prominent politicians such as Pat Schroeder.

DA: How do you intellectually reconcile the politics of race with the politics of class?

AD: The overwhelming majority of black people are working-class, even though a few people have been allowed to achieve positions which were not open to us before. Economic demands need to be pushed to the forefront of the black movement, otherwise we would not survive.

DA: Do you call yourself a feminist?

AD: I've thought about that: my recognition of women's oppression is very much linked to class and race.

DA: You're wary of the term. Why?

AD: No, I'm wary of the historical connotations.

DA: What do you see those as?

AD: It originated in white, middle-class circles and for a long time was used to connote women who worked on issues which concerned only them — isolated from the larger context.

DA: There's a lot of it about still!

AD: I associate myself with black feminism, working-class feminism, progressive feminism.

DA: What are the prospects for the left in the US?

AD: Good, if we manage to develop the organising skills which take advantage of the consciousness which is around now. It seems that the more a progressive sentiment grows, so the monopolies consolidate their own ultra-right position. Yet, there's a lot of energy among the young: last 15 January, Martin Luther King's birthday, there was a march on Georgia: civil rights activists were attacked by the Ku Klux Klan: within one week 10,000 people went down to Georgia to demonstrate. At one time it took weeks and months to organise something like that.

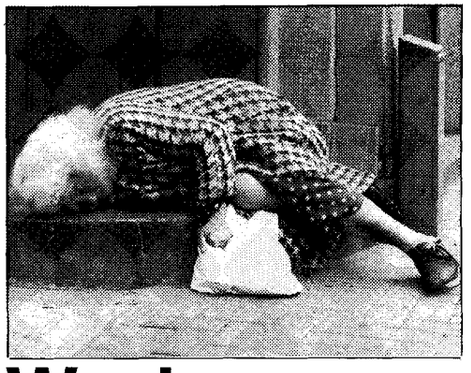
DA: Are there reasons to be cheerful?

AD: Yes, despite Reagan's second term other movements grew in strength and influence: the anti-apartheid movement, the movement against intervention in Central America. They were channels for the expression of anti-Reagan sentiment, to protest against his policies.

DA: What advice would you give to black women activists now?

AD: To develop a perspective between what they are doing now and their long-range goals. There's a tendency to get burned out after a short period. Working in multi-generational struggles gives me huge strength, seeing older people still fighting. Look at the people of South Africa, how long they have been in struggle. So what I say is . . . be prepared to go the distance. □

Who cares?



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CHILD SEX ABUSE

The hounding of Bell

Beatrix Campbell's report on the Cleveland child abuse cases (NS 31 July) criticised Stuart Bell, MP for Middlesbrough and defender of the Cleveland parents. Her report roused strong feelings:* HOWARD SHARRON *gives them words

STUART BELL, we now know from Beatrix Campbell's article on the 'disturbing truth' behind the Cleveland sex abuse cases, is a sexual populist, a conniver with Tories to shore up the besieged family. His crime is to have helped return home children who were, wrongly, it transpired, wrenched away from their parents in traumatic circumstances on flimsy and uncorroborated evidence of two pediatricians.

How many parents and children have, through Bell's intervention, been spared the nightmare inflicted on some 170 or so of the original children caught up in the campaign of Higgs and Wyatt and the Cleveland Social Services is not known. But the Northern Regional Health Authority is unwilling to deny reports from Richard Holt MP that nine out of ten diagnoses of child abuse from Higgs and Wyatt are now being overturned by the second opinion system, introduced after Bell's complaints.

In her search for the truth behind the Cleveland care cases Campbell supports uncritically the work of Higgs and Wyatt on purely ideological grounds, but presents her stirring eulogy ('They declined to tailor their diagnosis to prevailing prejudices and resources') as reasoned argument and analytical journalism. Yet she failed to take seriously the fact that Higgs and Wyatt's diagnoses were successfully challenged in the courts (this isn't even mentioned); she failed to talk to parents in the parents' group and she failed to talk directly to many of the pediatricians, psychologists, and police surgeons who had far more experience in sexual abuse than Higgs and Wyatt and who are convinced that something has gone terribly wrong.

A panic reaction

That such serious issues involving extreme distress and incursions into parents' and children's civil rights should be dealt with in such an unscrupulous way is more than a little worrying. *Yet Campbell's article mirrors some of the characteristic elements of our modern child abuse panic which have contributed to a terrible overreaction, of which Cleveland is just a clearly visible example.*

For example: in quoting 'the pioneering paper' by the Leeds pediatricians Jayne Wynne and Chris Hobbs in the *Lancet* in 1986 without bothering to quote the critical letters which followed, Campbell does exactly what Marietta Higgs appears to have done in Cleveland — failed to take adequate professional care in gathering and using information.

In the *Lancet* of 31 January Fiona Hey and others from the departments of Gynaecology, Pediatrics and Surgery at the St James University Hospital in Leeds discussed a case of a girl with dilated anus, anal fissures and swelling round the anus, together with a sore vulva — all classic signs of definite sexual abuse to Wynne and Hobbs.

After expert examination, including biopsies under general anaesthetic, it was found that the girl had Crohn's disease — a disease of the bowel. The doctors warn: 'The case illustrates the importance of alternative diagnoses.' They stress that an 'expert pediatric assessment is "mandatory" to prevent wrong diagnosis and the addition of severe stress to parents already deeply concerned by their child's illness.'

The director of Cleveland social services, Mike Bishop, would have refused the parents access for a second medical opinion. He explained to *Insight*, the newsletter of social services directors, on 10 July that 'it is totally unacceptable for a child to be re-examined a few days later by another medical practitioner.' Nothing short of a miracle would have then prevented the child going into long-term care, then being fostered with a view to adoption.

Campbell, as have many others, quotes the MORI '1 in 10' poll to conjure up her picture of rampant sexual abuse within the family, 'a million little girls and perhaps a million little boys being sexually exploited within their own families and neighbourhoods by respectable ordinary men.' Using the 1 in 10 figure this would mean that Britain had an under-16 population of 20 million — in fact it is nearer 4 million. The definitions of 'sexual abuse' have never been satisfactorily agreed (see *Guardian* Letters, 11 August).

The article fails to convey the horror of innocent parents caught up in the mire of sexual abuse accusations. One professional couple who took their 7-month-old daughter to hospital for a chest infection were told, after a five-minute examination, that the father had sexually abused the baby. The couple's next two children were examined and kept in the hospital for the same reason.

'When they took the children on Monday I could have gone hysterical. They told me to wait upstairs so the children wouldn't have to see how upset I was. I said "could it be constipation or was it hereditary?" But Dr Higgs said she was definite it was sexual abuse. The more we protested the more she stuck her heels in.

'The social workers then enforced a policy of rigid separation. They gave us no access; they said it was not appropriate. We didn't see the children for three weeks. There was a policy of complete alienation of the children from their family, their grandparents, the school, the health visitor and their regular doctor, everyone. The social workers never contacted any of them to see what the family was like.'

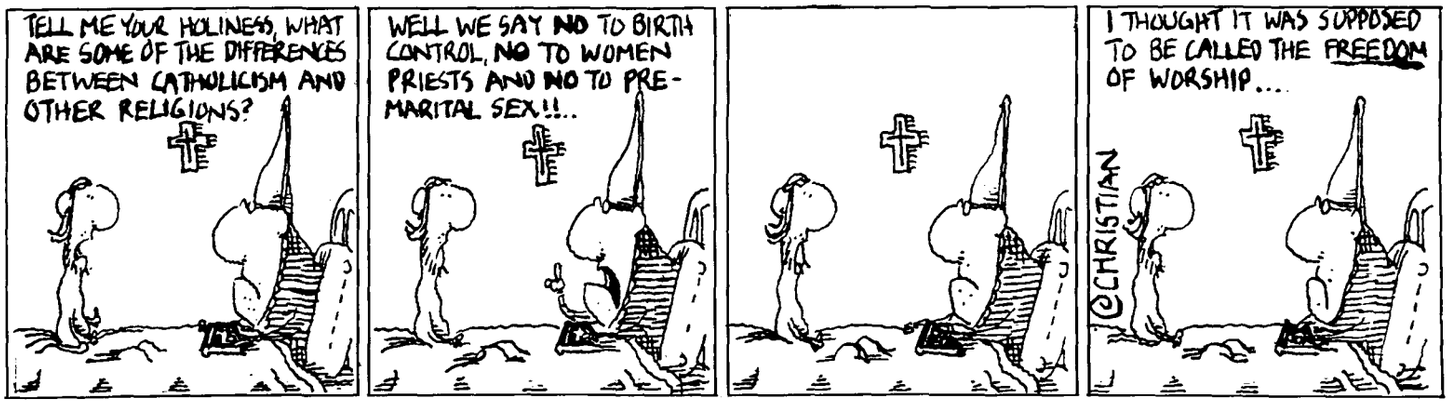
Another mother whose two older children are still in care, four months after she tried to get the chronic constipation of one of her children treated, says her worst moment was when she had settled her children down in hospital for the night and prepared them for going to foster homes in the morning. Doctor Higgs walked in with a social worker and said that they were short of beds because of more admissions and that the children would have to get dressed and go to foster homes immediately.

'The children became very distressed — all the tension suddenly came out — it was terrible having to leave them standing there screaming when we had to leave the hospital. My husband and I just broke down in tears outside. There was no need for Dr Higgs to have been so cruel. It was our first introduction to some very cruel and callous people.'

The parents have now had a favourable report from Dr Roberts which is likely to reveal an extraordinary mis-diagnosis and are hopeful that their children will be returned home.

Another parent: 'As parents we have been treated like dirt. It's unbelievable. We just kept saying will no one consider the possibility that they might be wrong. Our children were told categorically that they wouldn't come home to us until they told the psychologist what their father had done to them — it was straightforward blackmail. Its hard to believe this could happen in Britain in 1987.' □

Howard Sharron is editor of Special Children *magazine.*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MEDIA

The tension in the tube

John Lloyd

THE RELATIONSHIP between the political and the televisual grows no simpler. Nor will it. There will be no return to an age where all knew their place — that probably did exist, through the '50s — for now none do know their places and are unlikely to discover them soon. The relationship will be in constant flux for the foreseeable future: the best that can be hoped for are some handrails.

For the present, there is a perceived malaise in current affairs television — the area with which politics and politicians are most concerned. That is compounded of a decline of ratings and growth of competitive pressures: but it is liberally spiced, too, by a less measureable loss of faith in a *mission* for current affairs journalism.

There has long been a tension between news and current affairs journalists: between the hardnoses and the intellectuals, the first sneering at the second for their long-windedness and other-worldliness, the second contemptuous of the first for their shallowness and another-day-another-horror mentality. But neither side questioned the other's functions: current affairs was there to explain what news reported; sometimes current affairs investigations broke major stories or outrages which news hadn't time to investigate.

Now, satellite technology, the greater contextualising of *Channel Four News* and to a lesser extent of the *Nine O'Clock News* and *News at Ten* bulletins, have constricted the scope of current affairs. Satellites mean reporters can send over packages of background material, which can be filled out by editors at the broadcasting centre, to make a ten-minute or even 15-minute report using the latest pictures, slashing the comparative advantage current affairs programmes used to have, with the slower-travelling film. So news is more vivid and more explained; and TV news reporters have been the ones winning the spurs. Kate Adie, of BBC News, outraged Norman Tebbit over her reporting of Libyan casualties; and it was Michael Buerk, also of BBC News, who 'broke' the story of the Ethiopian famine. That kind of controversy, that kind of story, used to be the preserve of current affairs.

Satellites carry a more profound threat than that, though. Once the multinationally controlled satellite channels — like Rupert Murdoch's Sky Channel, with a mere 300,000 subscribers in the UK linked in to a cable distribution system — begin to carve large slices out of the market, they will seek to replace the present news and current affairs output with their own. This service, paid for by subscription, *must* get a mass audience to survive. Sir Denis Forman, Granada's vice-chairman, said in his Dimbleby Lecture last month:

> When we see the wares of the international brigade on our sets, we should understand one thing: their television is different from our television: it is aimed at a mass market all of the time . . . it may pose a threat to British television's service to minorities . . . what will happen in this country when the viewing figures drop, as drop they will? Will the BBC and ITV continue to be as well funded as they are now? Will they still offer programmes as good and as various as they do today? How can we make sure they will? How can minority programmes in all their variety swim along with the new technology? Who can we turn to? Who is in control? Who are our masters now?

FORMAN's last rhetorical question invites the answer: politicians. His lecture was full of a foreboding that they would close in on the BBC and ITV, not so much by sniping at its 'biased' coverage as by pushing it onto a marketplace which would do the opposite of increase choice: it would render it into a (in his words) 'grey mid-Atlantic putty'. The struggle in which British broadcasters are now engaged — though they do not all and always see themselves as playing on the same side — is to rescue what of pluralistic, minority programming they can from the encroachment of market values which are generally assumed to depress quality to the level of the lowest intellect, or near it. That struggle is the harder because that tradition is relatively young, and is most firmly embodied in (though it was not invented by) Channel Four — which may itself lose its relatively protected position as a slightly spoiled foster child of the independent companies, and become a fully independent, and thus fully competitive, fourth channel.

It is made harder still by the matter of loss of faith. A highpoint of the Edinburgh TV festival later this month will be a mock 'trial' of current affairs television, based on the motion that 'current affairs has abused its privileged position: it has failed to innovate and has become complacent and boring'. The motion, which will see real barristers call media witnesses for the prosecution and for the defence, speaks to the heart of the present febrile uncertainty as to what current affairs should be *about*.

Put over-crudely, the crisis is one of liberal values. Liberal values are held to infuse most current affairs outputs, and are the unspoken assumptions behind the main 'flagship' programmes — *Panorama, World in Action, This Week* and others, both national and regional. These programmes' origins were typically in the '60s, when programme producers had a faith in, and money for, exposés and investigations which were designed both to inform and to change minds and even society. The programmes set a standard not just for British television, but for the world: it was not mere self-congratulation which saw them as unique products in a Western televisual world where current affairs journalism was tightly controlled (France), deferential (West Germany) or relatively superficial (the US).

It is these programmes which now face the charge of being 'complacent' and 'boring': significantly, two of the three witnesses for the defence are Roger Bolton, editor of *This Week* (Thames) and Ray Fitzwalter, veteran editor of *World in Action* (Granada). The third is John Tusa, managing director of the BBC's World Service and a former *Newsnight* presenter.

Significantly, too, one of the witnesses for the prosecution is David Cox, head of current affairs at London Weekend Television and executive producer of *Weekend World*, the programme begun by John Birt, now the BBC's deputy director general. *That* is significant because *Weekend World*, and LWT's current affairs, did and still does stand for an alternative set of values, even while partaking of the old ones: and its creator is now in the most powerful position for reforming British TV current affairs that anyone could have.

BIRT IS NOW the focus of suspicion and abuse within and outside of the BBC. Much of that is bureaucratic and personal: fears of loss of power, loss of influence and loss of job. But part of it is a political assumption that Birt is there to 'do Tebbit's dirty work', and make the current affairs output less abrasive, less investigative, less adventurous. To be sure, Birt is no fan of much of current affairs journalism: and his 'bias against understanding' initiative, launched in the mid-'70s with Peter Jay (then presenting *Weekend World*), did insist on the duty of TV journalists to explain the world and not to fit it into prior assumptions. But from his reign at LWT came the investigative *London Programme* (begun by Barry Cox, now the station's controller of current affairs and features); the Peter Jay/Brian Walden interviewing style which filleted not a few senior politicians; and special programmes for and by members of minority groups.

His pluralism at LWT *has* bred something of a counterculture. David Cox can be fiercely scornful of liberal bias in journalism: and Jane Hewland, another Birt protegé and now executive producer of *Network 7*, loves to shock the liberal cultural establishment with the view that pop programming and newspapers are every bit as worthy as its own favoured pursuits.

That counterculture has other focuses, notably in the Channel Four production companies. Diverse Productions — *Diverse Reports* has just ended its run on Channel Four in favour of even more diverse reports from a variety of hands — pioneered a certain style of 'biased' reporting, in which journalists of the right and left made clear their own views in the course of their reports. Throughout the Channel Four companies there are men and women who are impatient of what they see as the lethargy of the flagships, and fashion smaller, nippier craft which dart in and out of harbours not used by the great liners.

There is much heat generated in these debates, and it will find expression at Edinburgh. To an outsider, there *does* seem a common interest. That is, that pluralism survives: that the flagships' missionary position remains — and remains properly funded, so that it can spend time and energy on investigations; that the BBC, or ITV, retains the courage to hire sandpaper talents like Duncan Campbell (of *Secret Society*); that independent companies can make films passionately hostile to Soviet tyrannies, or to apartheid; and that *Channel Four News* and *Newsnight*, or equivalents, still make some sense of the daily phenomena.

The government is more likely to play a malign role in this than otherwise: it does not love dissent, except in theory, and it regards the market as a solvent for most awkward substances. Journalists of the left and right, of the schools of the mission-to-explain and the passion-to-inform, have a common interest in closing ranks and continuing to find more diverse ways of serving the nation's need to know.

John Lloyd worked for LWT current affairs from 1974-1977.

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ARTS

EDINBURGH

Through the minefield

Angus Calder

As this year's festival gets underway, we attempt to sort the wheat from the chaff, and the chaff from the stuff that Uncle Jock and Gran could watch without worry

'EDINBURGH FESTIVAL' comprehends not one world but hundreds, most of them very small. While some people vanish (for instance) into Film House for days, myriad groupuscules have their entire lives bound up in fringe shows and resemble the Orient's celebrated hordes of beggars. Advice to *NS* readers contemplating a sortie: *don't*, without trustworthy advice, fall for spiels in the Fringe brochure like 'the story of a trade union martyr packed with songs and comedy'. Beware of groups with names like 'Screaming Abdabs' and of sordid church halls in the suburbs. To begin with, at any rate, stick to semi-comfortable venues in the centre and go for companies with some track record.

Believing this, I headed for Moray House Theatre where Borderline, a long-established travelling theatre out of Ayr were premiering *Turning Over* by the experienced Brian Thompson. The result was less like the quite savagely observant Ayckbourn of *Chorus of Disapproval* than the would-be-serious, finally mushy, Ayckbourn of *Woman in Mind*. Cleverly designed and lit so that one set neatly provides a TV cutting room in Acton and a hill-station in India where a soppy documentary is being constructed, it's very well directed and acted (with Sandy Neilson at his best as a pot-smoking, drunken producer). It won many laughs with good jokes about the horrors of filming in general and in hot weather in particular. But, after the interval, it fell into philosophising over Western obsessions with the East. (Did one character really say, 'I found what I was looking for but didn't know what I was looking for?') As if determined to prove Edward Said right, it included the white-girl/dusky-chap liaison with shock-horror incident *à la* Forster and Paul Scott. But take your gran or Uncle-Jock-over-from-Canada — neither would be disappointed.

The Traverse would certainly disturb them with some of its eleven premieres, but not, I think, with its three in-house productions of new British plays. Jenny Killick, as director, and writer-in-residence John Clifford have now evolved together a medium which combines stimulation with ingratiation. Had Clifford's *Playing With Fire* been the first work of his I'd seen, I think it would have delighted me as much as *Losing Venice* three years ago. But, as with *Lucy's Play*, I found the mixture too much as before. Take a myth and put it into a historical setting seasoned with anachronisms. (This time it's mediaeval France with a female version of Faust.) Toss in serious croutons about poverty, gender, war. Serve very well acted.

Organic intellectual: Ken Currie's Gramsci-reading 'Self-Taught Man' from *The Vigorous Imagination*

The highly promising Amy Hardie uses the same recipe in *Noah's Wife*. Her script reworks the Flood in a Sudanese setting where people who live in primaeval famine have modern guns and trannies. The commitment of the cast, with Leo Wringer outstanding, is exemplary, but Hardie paints herself into a corner. The only acceptable ending is that the admirable Mrs Noah, Decima Francis, an archetypal proto-feminist who won't sleep with Noah to bear Japhet, Ham, etc., must refuse to leave the Ark at Ararat. But mythically this isn't acceptable . . . I was more convinced by Peter Jukes' first full-length play, *Abel Barebones and the Humble Company*, a saga in which Cain's brother returns to lead a mixter-maxter of mediaeval misfits against The Great Mortality. New-minted myth develops suspense and momentum. Diminutive Kathryn Hunter playing a male soldier is sheer joy. Cliffordism works.

The Traverse world is big. Frank Dunlop's is vast. He's into his fourth year as Director of the official Festival and has now firmly set his personal stamp on it. He's acknowledged certain old criticisms: thus, the concert programme is now refreshed with a high tally of new works, above all in the second Weekend of Twentieth Century Music sponsored by the wonderfully enlightened Scottish Post Office. But the second World Theatre Season is very much Dunlop's own thing. The range should prove exhilarating — Ireland

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and New Guinea, Tokyo, Stockholm, Helsinki, East Berlin and Shanghai. Above all, expectancy has surrounded the Gorky Theatre from Leningrad, the folk dancers from Archangel and the puppets from Georgia — all parts of an unprecedented USSR contingent which includes the Bolshoi orchestra — enough *glasnost* to make our eyes glaze over.

I can report later on the official conference about culture involving Russian and Brit bigwigs. Meanwhile, the exhibition of lacquer-work from Palekh, a village in Muscovy which had an icon-painting tradition pre-1917, represents beautifully what can be done with papier-maché, egg-yolks, wolf's teeth and other aids. I found this more appealing than *Moscow: A Private View* at the 369 Gallery, where middle-aged Soviet painters deal with unofficial themes. After fighting my way round the TV crew to see these prodigies I was, at first, wholly scunnered. As the crowds cleared, I realised that technically the stuff was no better or worse than the run of professional contemporary art. The problem was that its themes (friends, flowers, my-favourite-view-of Moscow) were so intolerably unadventurous that the term 'petty-bourgeois' rose ineluctably to mind. Gran and Uncle Jock would love most of it. But I'm grateful to have encountered three large canvases by Victor Kalinin, who invests artefacts and landscape with subtle colour and disturbing suggestions. A terrain has been warred over (as in 1941-45) but contains no heroic survivors. Kalinin is far more interesting than the very expensive American, David Salle, whose accomplished, banally allusive work can be seen at the Fruitmarket Gallery.

Wittily deconstructive *Bits and Pieces* by the late lamented Joseph Beuys at the Demarco Gallery — visual epigrams, little artefacts, *trouvés* — help one to get Art into proportion. One pleasure of *The Vigorous Imagination*, a roundup of work by young Scottish artists at the National Gallery of Modern Art, is that some of them are equally irreverent. But they're a very varied crew indeed and feyness (Wizniewski) and inanity (Braham) are, alas, not absent. I don't yet trust Stephen Conroy or Calum Colvin — both in their mid-20s — not to become as silly as Gilbert and George. Colvin's intriguing technique — he makes glossy colour photos of the *trompe l'oeils* he paints over cheap secondhand objects — is so far dedicated to exploring sexual fantasy. Conroy's equally startling application of traditional techniques and art-historical allusions to the mysterious activities of staid, melancholy young men are queasemakingly portentous compared to the exuberant whimsies of Stephen Campbell, whose vast international success, as much as anything, explains why Scottish juvenilia top the bill at this Festival. (I sense a misalliance in Campbell's case between Big Artworld Money and a pisstaking imagination.)

Campbell trained at Glasgow School of Art. I love that city, but there's no doubt that the arrangement of this exhibition gives it an undue prominence. Newcastle-product Sam Ainsley's feminist banners are brushed past in stairways. Dundee-trained Ken McIntyre's re-workings of ancient myths as modern pastoral are cramped into a dingy corridor. Conroy, Campbell and Peter Howson and Ken Currie — all Glasgow-trained — command the big spaces which the casual dropper-in won't miss. I concede that Howson's whopping pictures of male workers and dossers need space, much as I still distrust his transactions with machismo. And I still find Currie's depictions of sad people hoping amidst industrial decay very moving indeed. But why must men overwhelm? Why is June Redfern's impressive style better seen in the little Mercury Gallery in another part of town? Has Gwen Hardie been punished for choosing to live in Germany or is it that, like Redfern, she's an Edinburgh alumnus? She's only 25 and her work, centring on the female body seen inside-out, has evolved very fast. Of merely three paintings in *The Vigorous Imagination,* only 'The Brave One' represents the serious wit and cold intensity of her current work. □

TELEVISION

Fear to tread

Diane Abbott

THE EQUALIZER (ITV) is a slickly made American series about a heroic urban vigilante. This 20th-century Scarlet Pimpernel is played by a suitably stony-faced Edward Woodward. He goes where policemen fear to tread, dealing out swift retribution to muggers, rapists, etc. And he is supremely unconcerned about whether these people have actually been convicted in a court of law.

But, when mugging is identified with black people and the so-called 'law and order' debate is actually about race, films and programmes like these are not exactly reassuring for black people.

They feed on people's fear of mugging and rape and propagate the myth that urban crime is some terrible new modern plague. Furthermore, they promote the notion that retribution is a practical and appropriate response to crime. And, above all, they legitimise the idea that people, and *categories of people* who are *assumed* to be criminals, have no rights — are almost a lesser species of human beings.

The reality of urban crime is a little different from the world of *The Equalizer*. There is no correlation between race and crime and inner-city London has been a violent place since the 18th century. Strangers *are* more likely to rob you and take your purse — but the person most likely systematically to sexually abuse your child is your husband or lover; most women are raped by someone they know; and the person most likely to kill you is a member of your own family or someone already known to you.

So it would be nice to see a series about urban crime a little more realistic than the *Equalizer* genre. It could feature a brave woman doctor who fearlessly brings to justice men who batter their wives and sexually abuse their children. Perhaps it could be set in Newcastle . . .

I knew an ITV shop steward once, a baleful man who had been the steward at his company since before the dawn of time. A very new researcher made the mistake of saying in front of him something about ITV management and their concern about programme quality. He shot me a look of withering scorn (for yes, dear reader, it was I) and said, 'Those people — they don't give a fuck about programme quality. If they could get away with playing music between the ads they would. If they could get away with showing a blank screen between they ads they'd do it.'

At the time I thought it was an unreasonable thing to say; I now know that it is (probably) the single most intelligent thing that anyone has ever said to me about the men (and they are all men) who run independent television in this country. It explains the prevalence of chat shows like Channel 4's **UK Late**. For ITV management, the chat show is one step up from a blank screen: i.e. very cheap television.

UK Late is a chat show like any other chat show. Its distinctive features are: it goes out at 11.30 at night; the presenters John Lloyd and Mary Harron are brighter and less banal than most; it packs ten people around a table and it goes on for an hour and half. Presumably, the producers think that with so many people and such inordinate length someone must eventually say something interesting. I don't know. I went to bed just after midnight.

Norma Jean alias Marilyn Monroe (ITV) was a documentary built around the existence of a lengthy taped interview with the actress. The interview was the only long one of her career and it had never been broadcast before. To flesh it out, the producers had the ingenious idea of having another blonde actress, Catherine Deneuve, filmed listening to the tape and playing extracts from her films. But listening to Monroe's voice at length was moving; it matched her appearance: contrived, knowing, intensely vulnerable.

Underground (C4) was a documentary about a radical American organisation of the 1970s — the 'Weathermen', named after a Bob Dylan song. Having bombed 26 buildings, including the Capitol and the Pentagon, they went on the run from the FBI and renamed themselves the 'Weather Underground'. The film had footage of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Castro and Ho Chi Minh. It also showed anonymous heroes like crippled Vietnam war veterans throwing away their medals on national television to show their contempt for the war. And it brought back vividly a time when no one had heard of Margaret Thatcher, the Vietnamese stopped the might of the American war machine and everything seemed possible, including revolution.

The Weathermen had no doubts. Nice, white, middle-class students, they had been swept into politics by the student protest movement and were horrified by the racism that they discovered, but that black Americans had lived with since slavery. In the film, made in 1975, they called themselves 'professional revolutionaries and fugitives' and talked confidently about revolution being just around the corner. 'A great transformation is going to happen'; 'In the future we see a torrent of rebellion'; 'Revolution is inevitable'. They described their project confidently and variously as 'We are going to remake this country on the streets' and 'We will . . . take the student base and explode it into the whole of the American people.' It was all very sad. The American people have gone on to elect Ronald Reagan for two successive terms and yesterday's students are today's yuppies. □

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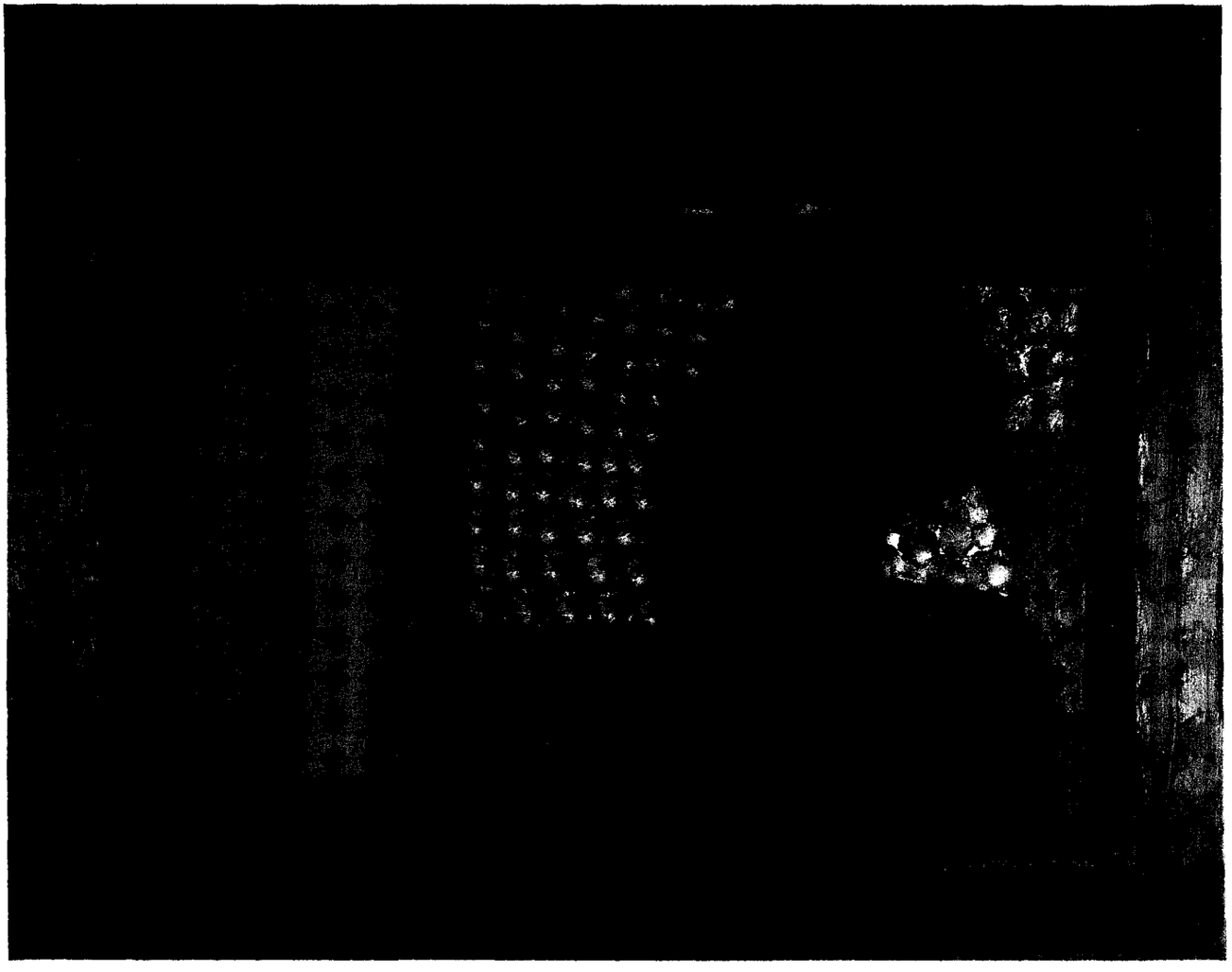

Howard Hodgkin's 'Menswear' (1980-85)

ESSAY

Art in the godless world

Waldemar Januszczak

From the street-corner evangelism of Gilbert & George's 'sermons' to the high-church, altarpiece art of the Saatchi museum, contemporary painting and sculpture has acquired a quasi-religious function — as precious relic and as sign of mystery in an otherwise materialist world

ANYONE WHO HAS visited some of the new art galleries mushrooming up in the ultra-developed world — in America, West Germany, Japan —must surely have been struck by the aura of phoney religiosity that architects and designers set out to achieve in them.

Today's modern masterpiece hangs on its pristine white gallery wall like a precious altarpiece. Instead of a communion rail it will often have a rope stretched between elegant supports in front of it to keep the congregation on their side of the spiritual divide. If it is a piece of sculpture it will stand in splendid isolation in the centre of the room, like a font or a *baldacchino*, communicating nothing so much as its own sanctity and spiritual presence.

The art gallery has replaced the church as the public building par excellence of our times. Japan alone is said to have opened some 500 new museums in the past two decades. Visit the private London museum of Charles Saatchi — probably the most active and certainly the most famous modern art collector of our times — and you are visiting the 1980s' equivalent of the Venetian nobleman's private chapel, a large, completely white building inside which the works of art are arranged in self-contained sacred spaces like holy relics.

No one entering the Saatchi Museum when Carl Andre's holy brasses — sets of steel plates, actually — were laid out with such perfect symmetry on the floor or Andy Warhol's 20-foot-tall portrait of Chairman Mao hung like a giant icon on the end wall of its own side-chapel, can have left the building in much doubt that they had been allowed into a private palace of worship.

The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, observing the new super-collectability of art, has written, 'It is possible and necessary to suspect that art is involved in giving the additional luxury of a clean conscience to people who have already set themselves up with everything else.' Certainly the current art boom, in prices, galleries and the sheer numbers of working artists, must be seen as hard evidence of art's growing popularity as a yuppy commodity. In a society experiencing a spiritual famine, what commodity could be more valuable than one which reliably offers tit-bits of real spiritual nourishment — Art.

It is one of the facts of art historical life that every epoch re-invents the death of art for itself. When Caravaggio painted St Paul with dirty feet, the late Renaissance tut-tutted and said it was the end of sacred and religious art and, therefore, of all art. In fact it was the beginning of the Baroque age. When the Impressionists packed their ready-made canvases and mass-produced tubes of paint into a rucksack and struck out into the countryside, the French Academicians laboriously grinding down lapiz lazuli in their studios foresaw the demise of serious painting. It turned out that they were witnessing the birth of a Modernism as light and mobile as an armoured car.

Now it is the turn of the Modernists themselves to experience sensations of bewilderment, suddenly finding that the main line they were

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standing on has become an abandoned siding. Previously everything had had to pass through their station. Today it is haunted only by the intellectual equivalent of a steam-train buff. As Hans Belting, author of *The End of the History of Art?**, observes: 'The real nostalgics today are the champions of classical Modernism.'

Belting's book is the latest addition to a rapidly growing corpus of 'what-next?' and 'art-is-dead' literature trying to make sense of the art historical lurch that has taken place in the past decade. We have settled into the postmodern age, banished the glass towers of Modernism and completed such a rapid aesthetic U-turn that we can find the highest architectural value in groupings of pseudo-Roman pilasters and ornate neo-Egyptian columns (see critical responses, albeit not in these pages, to the new National Gallery extension).

Belting is himself a former Classical-enough Modernist forced by these recent art-historical events to revise his position, which he does rather grudgingly, remaining convinced that the old methods must still be used to come to new conclusions. In *The End of the History of Art?* he gives an ultimately hopeless performance as a man trying to open a new door with an old set of keys. He fails, of course, and declares the door un-openable, Modernism a swan-song, the history of art dead-ish. 'I am convinced that today only provisional or even fragmentary assertions are possible.' But he and others like him will undoubtedly continue to return in hope to the problem-site. 'Perhaps one day yet a universal history of art will be conceived along these lines . . . ?'

As the question mark at the end of the title implies, *The End of the History of Art?* is not really a necrology. You cannot after all declare the death of something that never existed. As Belting himself describes it, 'the universal history of art' was the fabulous creation of late 18th-century German scholarship, a theoretical construct which could only be used to fit the facts when the range of facts considered relevant was suitably narrow — basically, when the history of art remained the history of West European aesthetics. The moment that less orthodox art historians began to lift their scholarly head and bring other social, economic, political, racial, personal, geographic, historical, contextual, perceptual, psychological as well as aesthetic factors into focus — as they have been doing increasingly since the late 1950s — the days of the 'universal art history' were numbered. The wonderful Gombrich once quipped that there was no such thing as art, only the lives of the artists. Or, as Belting puts it, 'The problems arise when the aesthetic experience — that is, an essentially pre-scholarly experience — is declared the object of scholarly inquiry.'

Belting's contention is that what may indeed have died is not art, or the history of it, but an art historical theorem that has remained provable since the Renaissance and can be traced back to the example of Georgio Vasari, the first real art historian. It was Vasari who presented in crude form the formula that art must continuously progress towards some distant ideal. At first, the perfection it searched for was a purely visual one — a reflection of the visible world that was as truthful as the artist could achieve. Gradually the notion of perfection itself became the goal, until in our own Modernist age we have seen the painting of a white square on a white background, not once but countless times. This vision of art history as a kind of heroic climb towards a distant summit pre-supposes that one day the summit will be reached and both art and the history of it will have nowhere to go. Belting believes that point has been reached. He is not alone.

IT SEEMS CLEAR to me that any art-historical counter-theory trying to make sense of these events in such a way that it does not end up painting itself into a corner, as Modernism has done, must examine the impulse that drove, and drives, scholars and critics to belief in a universal art history in the first place — the appetite for universal models.

The Modernist orthodoxy actually believed in one art history, a divine route that passed through all the world's epochs, countries, peoples, economic systems, art objects, to arrive at a universal understanding. As far as nostalgic Modernists are concerned the crime of the anything-goes-pluralism that we call post-modernism is that, whichever way you turn it around, you cannot make it fit into a universal history of art.

The ultimate form, the ultimate artwork, pure form, the underlying truth, the symbolic form, the real form beneath the superficial form — there were many attempts in the vocabulary of Modernism to describe the Modernist's grail, but all dealt with some kind of invisible and immovable standard, some elusive and I would say illusory pre-existing order which the Modernist artist or architect would attempt to uncover. There is no other way to understand a Miesian glass tower or the first painting of a white square on a white background by Malevitch except as the physical manifestation of a mystical concept of perfection.

Which is why Cezanne would surely have been as perplexed and horrified by a Miesian tower as 99 per cent of the population continues to be. The Impressionists, Cezanne, the Cubists were all primarily concerned with finding ways of representing multi-faceted nature more truthfully. Their ethics were materialistic.

It is only in the second phase of Modernism — which I would call Mystical Modernism and date from the Russian Revolutionary experiment in art, and which is surely impossible to understand without taking into account the extra-aesthetic considerations of revolutionary fervour and intoxicating hopes of a brave new world — that it became a Modernist ambition to discover some kind of inner truth rather than describe an outer one.

Malevitch, the most determined and most talented of the great Russian abstractionists, proclaimed to anyone willing to listen that his white square on a white background was intended to hang in the corner of the room in the space traditionally occupied by holy icons. It was to be a replacement for the image of God, a secular icon to the Marxist revolution. And here, finally, we come to the crux of the whole matter. If religion had previously been the opium of the people then art was now to be that opium's replacement: a kind of religious methadone for those, like Malevitch himself, suffering with serious religious withdrawal symptoms. The new art would fill the God-shaped hole and assuage the pre-scholarly appetite for mystery, spirituality, imagination — and ultimate order. The belief in the universal form was surely the appetite for God made secular.

To understand this crucial development — and, without understanding it, too much art historical activity of this century must appear nonsensical — it is necessary to look back into the mists of the 19th and early 20th centuries and watch the gradual usurpation of art's traditional roles by a variety of newly invented media: notably photography and, later, film. Thus, where the Renaissance prince would turn to his court painter for a portrait, the 19th-century bourgeois turned increasingly to the camera. Where William's conquest of Britain was recorded on the Bayeux Tapestry, the Mexican Revolution is still remembered on wonky celluloid. Where Julius Caesar used thousands of carved marble busts of himself to mark out the territories of Imperial Rome, the possessions of the British Empire had the Queen's face mechanically mass-produced on the corners of their stamps. Where Hogarth produced the Rake's Progress as a series of racy prints, today's morality tales and soap-operas run on television. And so on.

Thus the only functions which art has succeeded in holding onto in our own century are, first, those which stem from its inate, hand-made preciousness — art-collecting is the 20th-century equivalent of mediaeval relic-buying — and, second, from its continuing ability to describe the indescribable.

I am not claiming that it has been a straightforward swop — art for God. The majority of the population continues to believe in some sort of god and some sort of art at the same time. But art's value to society today is focussed on its power to mystify rather than explain, on the mystery of its suggestions rather than the certainty of its conclusions. Where art had since the Renaissance been a repository for images that described and proposed an ordered world-view, it has become — since the advent of Mystical Modernism — an experimental form offering shifting sensation. Art has, if you like, become one of the performing arts. And the aim of the performance is to supply its audience with a spiritual frisson of a kind that used to be supplied by religious experience. It is a function that has bridged the Modernist/postmodernist divide.

A ROTHKO PAINTING ten feet wide envelops you with glowing colour and makes gallery-going feel like standing up against a stained-glass window. As church attendances go down so art attendances go up. As churches close so new art galleries open.

Even the artists themselves seem to believe that their role is now an evangelical one, saving society from itself. Gilbert & George call their giant photoworks 'sermons' and give them titles like Hope, Life, Death. Those who have attended a 'performance-lecture' by the late Joseph Beuys must have been struck by the artist's role-identification with that of a holy man. When Beuys did extraordinary things on stage — wail like a cayote, cover a blackboard in indecipherable

* *Hans Belting's* The End of the History of Art? *is published by the University of Chicago Press at £13.50.*

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squiggles — he was doing the things that shamans do, before an audience with an inchoate appetite for shamanism.

In an increasingly materialist Western world — and both the kind of art and the kind of art history we are talking about is entirely an Americo-European and now Japanese phenomenon — inhabited by creatures with a historical appetite for the anti-materialistic, art's importance as a supplier of spiritual frisson grows in direct ratio to the growth of economic and scientific materialism. Science may chip away at the myth of God but it provides no replacements to satisfy the spiritual appetites that demanded the myth in the first place. The more materialistic the world of the consumer becomes, the fiercer the consumer's appetite for the non-materialistic. The fiercer the consumer's appetite, the higher the prices they are prepared to pay to have it assuaged: see recent art prices at auction.

White squares on a white background; lines of stones arranged along the gallery floor; melting clocks; baseballs floating in a tank of water — my random sample of art objects from the recent history of art, Modernist and postmodernist together, shows them to have one thing in common — ultimate inexplicability. Their mystery is their attraction. The spectator's imaginings around them constitute 90 per cent of the art work.

But to return finally to Hans Belting and his question mark. It is clearly unhelpful to suggest that art is dead while so many artists continue to produce it, unless you take the supremely patronising view that what they are producing does not qualify as art. In which case, what are they producing and what else should we call it? It is just as unhelpful to suggest the history of art is dead when the very act of making that suggestion in a book proves that some sort of questioning and sense-making inquiry continues to be undertaken by art-observers who are not art-practitioners. Hans Belting's mind, a sharp and experienced one, recognises all this and is keen to be seen to be continuing the examination. But his heart, you feel, is in mourning for the passing of a reliable friend: 'Art history, obviously, is not finished as a discipline. But in some of its familiar forms and methods it is perhaps today exhausted.'

He and we are left with the question: does art have a greater purpose in the Post-God world than the supplying of a spiritual frisson to the man who has everything else? Perhaps — but it will require a struggle that has not yet begun.

Even that art which continues to perform a duty as an independent medium of observation and comment on the society around it is proving ridiculously collectable. On the gleaming white walls of the new temples of art even the Marxist artwork looks precious and exotic; it too plays its part as a temporary plug for the God-shaped hole, for the spiritual gap left by modern society's gradual realisation that God, like the idea of a universal history of art, is a theoretical construct, an attempt to maintain scholarly control over pre-scholarly urges.

I fear that art's main modern function can be compared with the role of nicotine-flavoured chewing gum in the progress of the smoker from addict to free person. Art is, I believe, currently playing an inglorious placebo-role in the ultimate weaning. □

WORK IN PROGRESS

Community theatre in the dock

Naseem Khan

IF ANYONE NEEDS a community play, then Docklands would seem to be it. Containing some of the most wretched and some of the most classy housing in the capital, it's a monstrous contradiction. 'There are homes,' burbles *Docklands Vistas* magazine, 'in every price range, from under £50,000 . . . to over £500,000.' Its 'East Ender' feature homes in on a suave investment banker, delighted with his three-bedroom house in Clippers Quay. But what of the other East Enders? And what of their sense of community? Was it served in any useful way by the Docklands Community Play put on in a vast warehouse in the George V Docks last week?

The theory and practice of the community play was graphically described by Ann Jellicoe, one of its greatest proponents, at the ICA last month. They have been outlined even more usefully since then in her newly published *Community Plays: How to Put Them On* (Methuen, £6.95). It is a stirring book that is very likely to lead other people to follow her example.

It all started innocuously enough, with Jellicoe's suggestion to the head of a local comprehensive in Lyme Regis where she and her family had moved — that she might write a play for the school. That play led to the discovery of a new form — the large-scale, locally based play — and the formation of Jellicoe's Colway Theatre Trust.

Each of the ten plays the trust has organised has been written for a distinct community at local request. The authors have been writers of the calibre of David Edgar, Howard Brenton, Howard Barker and Jellicoe herself. They are huge affairs: 150, Jellicoe says, is her optimum number of performers, with helpers of at least three times that amount. And each play, she says, has been extraordinarily potent, creating a new or enhanced sense of community for audience and participants alike. They call out 'a tremendous emotional force and commitment' and do, she has found, change lives.

But not all community ventures succeed as hers have done. People have been left feeling sore and let down. Certainly not all those that I have seen have carried the warmth and charge described so feelingly by Jellicoe and others. There must surely be criteria that will mark the difference between a huge amateur play and a community play?

Jellicoe herself offers some — two of them likely to be contentious. First, she is a strong opponent of what she regards as the 'extreme' community artists' view: that all who want to, regardless of aptitude, should be involved. Quality is what she applauds, rather than 'the philosophy of the infant school painting class' where involvement is more important than standards. Second, she argues for non-contentiousness. One early community play was nearly jettisoned, she says, by the unplanned inclusion of a CND stall at its foregoing fair. 'We are trying to build communities, not divide them.'

The problem comes — particularly for the critic — when trying to match theory with reality. What, for instance, to make of that Docklands Community Play in the George V Docks? The programme spoke glowingly of the fulfilment gained by everyone who had been involved. In the correct Jellicoe mould, it had been a goodly time in preparation (one year), involved a lot of people (150), had a local theme (a flamboyant, local music-hall manager called William Howard) and even a local writer (Trevor Lloyd). How much should one weigh all that against the undeniable fact that the theatrical experience was not very good?

The story, unearthed by local archivist William Bloch, is a delight. Called *Big Bill's Benefit*, the play takes place during one occasion in Big Bill's notional pleasure gardens and involves, as well as the expected acts, writ-servers, jealous rivals, nosy journalists and bad weather. The music by Ken Bolam was enchanting and Jack Tilley brought a rumbustious strength to the portly, gold-waist-coated figure of Big Bill. There were also some very attractive component parts. However, all was not well.

For a start, Trevor Lloyd's script, though pleasant, did not have the depth and dynamism necessary to carry the interest through a whole evening on one's feet. It was a *divertissement*, a romp, that needed far more inventiveness and energy to make it fizz as it should. Second, the directors, Ewan Marshall and Heather Peace, arranged it so that the audience who elected to sit (often the elderly or people with infants) were so far away from the points of action that it must have been almost impossible to hear. Diction on the whole was not very good anyway. In such a huge and resonant space, with people not used to projecting their voices, this was not surprising, so it was a pity that more had not been made of the music and more songs included.

The venue itself, though impressive at first did not help greatly either. Huge, grey and disused, it tended to dwarf human effort, while the sideshows lined up to inculcate jollity were too puny and too few in number to fight back.

The following night I was coincidentally back in Docklands, for South East Asia Arts Project's *Gor Hoi*. Presented on a platform jutting spectacularly over the edge of Shadwell Basin, it dealt with another strand of the East End's history — the history of the Chinese. But this was an elliptical event, performed by seven actors/dancers of Far Eastern origin to a score by Ted Chau. Mysteriously, beautifully and forcefully, it dealt with the trauma of immigration, using dragon boats skimming over Shadwell's water. There are clearly more ways than one — and some ways better than others — of expressing a history of community. □

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CINEMA

Under the hood

Judith Williamson

Blind Date (15)
Leicester Square Theatre
Tin Men (15)
Warner West End

IT WAS WAY BACK in 1963 that Betty Friedan diagnosed the emptiness felt by many apparently well-off, middle-class American women as 'the problem that has no name'. This emptiness was middle-class femininity itself; since then we have had men with no name, indeed horses with no name, but the phrase came back into my mind in trying to think about a consistent theme in recent US movies without using the world 'yuppy'.

For 'yuppy' merely cloaks in a life-style that familiar, problematic and yet dominant figure, the white middle-class male. If there is any deep-lying connection between this week's movies it is this new problem that has no name: the emptiness of middle-class male's success, and the equal emptiness of would-be middle-class male's failure.

This may seem a strangely serious way to kick into discussing two of the funniest movies in town; yet comedy and unease have always gone together, and their perfect marriage is found in that most potentially anarchic of film and theatrical devices, the gag. **Blind Date** is directed by veteran (*Pink Panther*) gag-master Blake Edwards; which gives a peculiarly physical dimension to its topical theme of Successful Executive discovering Other Life through Whacky Woman. There has been so much of this recently that it hardly needs re-analysing: sweet, straight, slightly goofy guy (Bruce Willis) in suit meets gorgeous woman (Kim Basinger) who goes berserk if she drinks; while — as in *Blue Velvet* and *Something Wild* — the oedipal structure of Another Man (previous boyfriend) turns the plot from its initial downhill slide of female-invoked craziness into a drawn-out battle between the two men for the woman. By the end of the film our hero has swapped suit for sweatshirt and, having lost his job, turned back to his 'real' love, music; its naturalness as an occupation is shown by his having a black musician friend who performs in a studio near the start of the film.

This is all sub-*Something Wild*, and yet there is a unique way in which the film almost physically produces its meanings. Gags are quite different from jokes; they seem to sidestep the conceptual circuit of verbal humour and function through the body — both in their enactment and their reception, where you're jerked into gut-laughter like going over a hump-backed bridge. There is something pleasurably infantile about that delight in destruction and chaos — it seems to correspond to a kind of polymorphous disorder, where custard pies defy cleanliness and motor co-ordination disappears.

In *Blind Date* this disorder is unleashed in a string of *social* eruptions — escalating from the important company dinner which Basinger turns into chaos, to the posh party where Willis goes wild and throws food at people. In the meantime the ex-boyfriend is made to smash his car into a variety of shop fronts. And this is the anarchic quality of gags: things fall apart. The shop-window smashing is only the visual form of a well-known riot activity: we love the sound of breaking glass. But it's not just the external world which cannot hold: an increasing number of gags suggest bodily disintegration as well. Anyone who's ever had the smallest crash knows the meaning of what I think of as My Car, My Self: and the moment when Willis' car is actually taken to pieces is a kind of ultimate stripping, echoed in the following bed-falling-apart scene and finally one where bits actually fall off a house.

Yet the exhilarating sense of social chaos is ultimately contained: films like this shake up a social order only to let it re-settle more securely. Order is re-established at the end on an apparently truer level as Willis, in his sweatshirt, strums his guitar by the sea, and the two lovers forsake alcohol for Coke: 'It's the real thing'.

What makes **Tin Men** — also hysterically funny — a more serious and depressing film is that there is no such easy location for the real thing, the missing meaning and inner self. Like much of *Blind Date, Tin Men* could easily be titled 'Car Wars': its two salesmen anti-heroes, (Richard Dreyfus and Danny DeVito) meet by crashing into each other and there is much smashing of windscreens and denting of bumpers during the course of their antagonistic relationship. But the repeated knocks to this shell of male identity (a notion implicit in the film's very title) are more difficult to take as the social constraints that mould it are felt powerfully and painfully in Levinson's acute portrayal of economic and peer-group pressures. The sense of surfaces, which *Blind Date* so joyously smashes through in the certainty of something real beneath, is here more fragile as so much of male identity is located, not behind, but precisely *in* those surfaces — and this is what much of the film is about, from its opening, chrome-caressing close-ups of Dreyfus' new Cadillac to its closing, overhead shot of the same car with the rivals driving together in it, among the traffic of other men. In *Blind Date* breaking up someone's new car is just fun; here, a sense of the desperation that conflates importance and cars makes it just a little more edgy.

Femininity, too, is felt through things: Dreyfus' memorable description of being with a woman (his rival's wife) is 'You go into the bathroom and see things you never saw before.' And DeVito exorcises her from *his* life by throwing all her belongings out of the window in one of the film's most fast-cut, breathtakingly gaggy scenes: muttering what sound like department-store categories — 'Gloves and Scarves', 'Toiletries' — as he empties the paraphernalia of femininity on to the sidewalk. As he does it, he yells, 'I'm a free man': the fact that he isn't is evident as the Inland Revenue come to take his house and car.

That the gags are not simply boundless acts of freedom in this film is shown vividly when DeVito knocks Dreyfus on the head and then carefully goes to the fridge to collect eggs and tomatoes, comes back, and throws them at him one by one, 'to humiliate you'. He ends up in the police station for this: social order is, as Durkheim says, as much a *thing* as any other, and a subtle form of slapstick is when you walk right into it.

Set in 1963, *Tin Men* says as much about the present as *Blind Date* does. Its salesmen protagonists both lose their licences; the hero of *Blind Date* loses his job. In both cases this is presented as progressive for the individuals concerned. Of the two films, *Tin Men* is more interesting socially, and more honest sexually; yet in their comic, anxious ways both express the wish for, and fear of, something different. To rephrase Freud's famous question: what is it that white middle-class men *want*? □

MUSIC

Where you going with that gun in your hand?

Jon Savage

ONE POSITIVE EFFECT of Pop's circular motion has been the many time-capsules that have been opened up by record companies freshly aware of their back catalogue and the attractions of a non-teenage record-buying public. To regard this as purely nostalgic is to miss the point, and to collude with the commercial impulse which regards the past as dead time, revivable only in the zombie world of anniversary-pegged revivals.

The last month has seen two new issues of timeless pop material. The first — whose attraction should be self-evident — is RCA's *Elvis Presley: The Complete Sun Sessions:* all 16 released Memphis recordings from 1954/5, plus a couple of sides of outtakes and try-outs. It's fascinating to listen to the three musicians stumble through seven takes of 'I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone', the first attempts at the sexy, unbelievably charged sound that created modern pop music. The second is a Polydor double album compilation of three Jimi Hendrix concerts at San Francisco's Winterland in October 1968; taken together with a videocassette and a record of D. A. Pennebaker's *Monterey Pop* footage they provide a documentary of an artist who is still capable of surprises.

It's been hard to get to grips with Hendrix for quite a while. The necrophilia that ensued after he died in October 1970 was so nauseating — and so pervasive — that it turned his life into melodrama and his death into some harbinger ('JimiJanisBrianOhWow!', went the dread litany) for the end of Hippie. Turned into base metal, his guitar virtuosity became the staple for many imitators during the '70s — one, Frank Marino, even claimed to be Hendrix's reincarnation — and unwittingly helped to create — along with his sexism, which became received — that most unattractive of styles, Heavy Rock. A sequence of shoddy issues and repackages during the '70s reduced his reputation still further. Yet in contrast to the fixity of the Hendrix icon, what comes over most clearly from these 1967/8 live performances is how much everything was in flux and how much was up for grabs.

What is immediately apparent is Hendrix's playfulness and commitment to improvisation. The Monterey concert is one long, delighted, amphetamined squeal of electricity as Hendrix fused blues, soul and Dylanesque, late mod pop

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with the new technology of public performance. Some of the material isn't up to much (at the beginning, Hendrix was a distinctly awkward lyricist) but its performance is so accelerated and gleeful as to be transcendent. Hendrix arrived at Monterey as a distinct hype — a black American guitarist who had played for years in jobbing soul bands transformed by English packaging and rendered exotic through the application of the latest Carnabetian finery — and left as a star. The performance ends with a moment of pure calculation, as Hendrix pours lighter fluid on his guitar and sets it ablaze, which on record translates into minutes of blissful feedback.

In comparison, the Winterland concerts are more considered: a song like 'Hey Joe' isn't taken at breakneck speed but stretched inside out with lightning quick changes of pace and emphasis. The flights of virtuosity and inspiration that are there at Monterey are now deployed more thoughtfully: at the heart of the record are the performances of a simple blues, 'Red House', and an improvisation called 'Tax Free', where Hendrix moves from the heavy, block chords of his pop/R&B style to a freer approach where feedback and distortion are harnessed to describe a whole variety of late 20th-century noises, from city sirens to technologised warfare. At the same time as Hendrix's mastery becomes more apparent, the limitations of his group of English session musicians become more obvious: within six months, he had disbanded his white Experience and set off on a quest for self.

In the light of the extraordinary invention and self-recreation of these performances, the subsequent events aren't so surprising. It was Hendrix's misfortune to appear to embody an age without boundaries; as Cherry Vanilla says in Jean Stein's *Edie'* 'You really believed that you were going to travel in this bubble right out to the end of the stratosphere. You weren't going to have to cope with the normal structures of life and getting older and making a living.' Today's performers are protected and distanced, but Hendrix's life and music were indissoluble: at the same time as he was smashing boundaries, he was caught — as a black man packaged for a white audience at a time of increased black militancy — in an appalling dilemma about race, while a distinctly exploitative management didn't help him to outgrow his Black Stud image. The consequence was psychic destruction.

The example of performers like Hendrix has helped to define the boundaries that they so flagrantly ignored. Today, pop music is characterised by a calculation and a materialism that reflects its changed industrial situation, its place in the 'media squaring' produced by the new, multi-media conglomerate. Yet just as the late '60s are beginning to come into focus, a decade after Punk's critique, then the vaunting possibilities of Hendrix's work have become a touchstone for those attempting some kind of emotional truth, whether in Chrissie Hynde's cover of his song about the dissolution of false images, 'Roomful of Mirrors', or in Prince's explicit homage in his vertiginous black/white, male/female, rock/funk fusions. As he rips through his current hit, 'U Got The Look', the most protected of all contemporary pop stars pays tribute to Jimi Hendrix's continuing legacy. □

Books

ANTHROPOLOGY

Fear and healing in Colombia

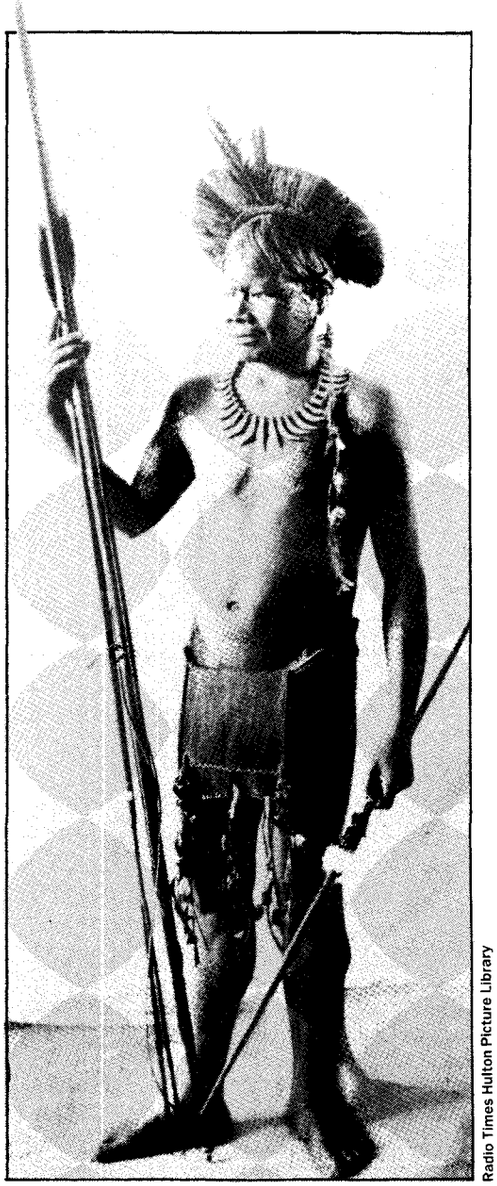
Olivia Harris

Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing
MICHAEL TAUSSIG *Chicago* £23.95

THIS IS AN enthralling and ambitious book. Grounded in a poetics that derives from Brecht, Gramsci, Conrad and, especially, from Walter Benjamin, it is the product of the author's many visits to Southern Colombia as an anthropologist. Its themes are many: it addresses colonialism, particularly at the frontiers where a boom industry — rubber in this case — extracted its raw materials from nature by means of violence against an Indian population for whom the ideas of work discipline and commodity exchange had no meaning; or where today a hybrid population lives and migrates on the margins of agribusiness. It confronts the image of the primitive, its necessary presence in Western discourse and the ways that academic writing and, indeed, artistic expression construct but also feed on it. Its theme is also the nature of magic, the operation of sorcery and the craft of shamanic healing. It argues against the closure of academic writing, in favour of montage, the decentering of textuality. I could go on.

Taussig's point of departure is a meditation on the nature of terror, as revealed by a comparison of different texts describing the Putumayo region at the turn of the century. The Amazonian forest and the savage Indians held a powerful attraction for explorers, scientists, missionaries and, of course, the entrepreneurs out to make a fortune from the rubber boom. 'The Devil's Paradise: a British Owned Congo' was the verdict of Walter Hardenburg, an American engineer and explorer. As a result of his denunciations the British government sent Roger Casement to report on the rumours of genocidal brutality — the same Casement who had earlier spoken out against similar atrocities in the Congo itself, and who was to be hanged for treason in 1916 after the Dublin Easter Rising.

In the first half of his book, Taussig examines attempts to explain terror such as that of the Putumayo rubber boom. The questions asked by the House of Commons Select Committee in 1913 reveal poignantly the fragility of rational construction: terror creates its own reality, out of fictions as much as truths. And it depends on the impossibility of defining or measuring, as well as on the threatening qualities which it imputes to its victims. The Putumayo terror was premissed on an image of 'wild' Indians and their cannibalistic orgies, a mimesis between the savagery attributed to the Indians by the colonists and the savagery perpetrated by the colonists in the name of civilisation. This was founded in what Taussig calls 'the space of death', an image which fuses what he sees as the transforming nature of colonial violence with what anthropologists call liminal or threshold states, where normal categories are blurred and dismantled.



Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

White man's terror: Amazonian Indian chief about to decimate the European colonial powers

Later, Taussig turns in a less sombre tone to consider the operation of the colonial death-space among those who live in the Putumayo and Cauca regions of Colombia today, especially the non-medical healers and those who consult them. Healing owes much of its efficacy to the power attributed to the Amazon forest and the hallucinogenic vine *yagé* which grows there. The greatest healers are held to be the shamans who live deepest in the forest; it is they who really understand the hallucinogen and the visions it induces. But there are also other sources of power for sickness and health: occult books of black

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magic; miraculous images of unlikely saints, such as Jose Gregorio Hernández, reputedly the first surgeon of Venezuela; blacks from the coast, white colonists from the mountains who apprentice themselves to the Indian shamans.

The shamans whom Taussig so sympathetically portrays are for him the paradigm of Walter Benjamin's wise man. They treat the 'everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday', and thus desensationalise mystery and fear. Shamanic practice is carnivalesque; its paradigmatic expression is not a Carlos Castaneda-type gnomic seriousness but bawdy humour. *Yagé* visions are a source of knowledge and understanding, but the drug is also, according to one shaman, a 'great liar'.

There is more than a casual echo of Conrad in Taussig's gifts as a teller of compelling tales — stories within stories at the outposts of civilisation. The play of intertextuality is set up from the beginning, since Conrad of course knew Casement in that heart of darkness that was the Congo. While Taussig's subject is a reality similar to that of the great Latin American novelists, his book is written as documentary and so avoids the more overblown conceits of, for example, García Márquez. Surrealism, which had to be invented by Europeans, is an inherent part of the life-form of the colonised peripheries, where the dispossessed inhabit a bizarre and fragmented world.

This world, in which a plantation hand with a mild splinter can be prescribed 20 days of steroids, or a girl who cannot afford a whole month's supply of contraceptives is sold a single pill in the local pharmacy for the night in question, is brilliantly evoked by Taussig. When he turns to theorising, however, the torrent of words sometimes loses direction and gets caught up in its own whirlpool. Are we to seek referents of his words, or are they, like the shamanic chants he describes so captivatingly, songs sung into the drug-filled night, liberated from representational responsibility? In a sense he forestalls any attempt to measure the consistency of his thought-provoking, often entrancing writing, by arguing powerfully against academic conventions of order in favour of what he calls 'epistemic murk', a concept similar to that of Barthes' 'obtuse meaning'.

The suggested connections between 'terror' and 'healing' are complex. Both are paradigms of the way that reality is made from peoples' imaginings, their fictions, their fears. Both are organised, crucially, around the notions of savagery and the colonial death-space, where meaning is fragmented and decomposed, and also re-enchanted. In Taussig's portrait of healing, the image of terror works positively, evoking the dangers and ambiguities of the process and indeed the vocation of healing.

But the reciprocal effect of the account of healing on the discussion of terror is disquieting: it manages subtly to humanise, even *idealise* what is meant by terror. Taussig implies by juxtaposition, by his whole mode of argument, that there is a historical link between the past terror and the present healing. This is heady and difficult terrain, suggesting that atrocity has a redemptive power. Taussig evades the implication and, by so doing, undermines the very analysis of terror which provides the point of departure for this provocative book. □

FICTION

Notes from underground

Boyd Tonkin

The Medusa Frequency
RUSSELL HOBAN *Cape* £10.95

EARLY IN *The Medusa Frequency*, the remaindered novelist and reluctant comic-strip writer Herman Orff hits a blank patch at the keyboard. He wonders whether there might be a software package for his Apple 11 called *Third Novel*. Since the Renaissance, plotless authors have always turned for succour to that data-base of ready-made narratives known to us (though not to their originators) as Greek mythology. In modern fiction, what follows is usually a stilted effort to dress a frail anecdote in the robes of universality.

Russell Hoban knows about these traps, and knows how to dodge them. *The Medusa Frequency* plays a set of nimble variations on the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Persephone, Hermes and the snake-permed Gorgon herself also make an appearance. Hoban shuttles between satire and sensuousness: between the ordinary light of common day and the flaming torches of the underworld.

Short, smart and fizzy, the novel seeks out the roots of creativity with none of the solemnity that phrase implies.

Blocked and near-bankrupt, Orff sits behind his green screen in Fulham. He dreams of escape from the grindstone of Classic Comics and of its boss Sol Mazzaroth: 'John Buchan, Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo — you name it, we put it in speech balloons.'

Tapping randomly, he somehow plunges into the protozoic slime of the creative unconscious. There he meets the Kraken, 'ancient of the deeps'. This shapeless sea-beast is compacted of terror and desire, a word-processed equivalent to the 'foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart' where Yeats located the start of all the ladders of art.

Via a session with Hermes Soundways, specialists in 'art trouble', and an encounter with the Eurydicean Melanie Falsepercy, Orff begins to have the odd conversation with the head of Orpheus himself. This crops up all over London, in any spherical guise: a cabbage, a football, even a grapefruit served for lunch at L'Escargot. In snippets, it tells him its sad history.

Was Orpheus really torn to pieces by the Thracian women he spurned? 'In a manner of speaking. But they did it one at a time.' Did his singing enchant the local flora and fauna? 'I don't think it actually *moved* stones and trees; what it did was put them in a new place for those who heard the singing.'

And what about the singer's quest for an obscure, ever-receding object of desire? 'Is not all art a celebration of loss?' Taking cues from Rilke's poem 'Orpheus, Eurydike, Hermes', Hoban's Orff sees art as reparation for the descent of one Eurydice after another into the sightless realm where Persephone reigns.

All this transpires in the novel's subterranean depths. At street level, the cartoonist's eye dominates. Herman loses Melanie; abandons Classic Comics; swims in a shark pool of Soho media hustlers and launches his own version of the myth as a series on the back of cornflake packets. In its disarming way *The Medusa Frequency* has much to say about the traffic between 'high' and commercial art and the value of their mutual dependence. It would be unfair to hunt for private apologias here, but Russell Hoban has to date written five acclaimed and cultish adult novels to 54 children's books.

Unchecked by wit, writing about writing will drift towards narcissism. To compensate, Hoban is savagely funny about the creator's egotism. All the people Orff meets blend into a few stock 'characters'. His lovers grow understandably sick of the role of Muse. He goes in search of Eurydices who follow and fade, but stands to learn most from Medusas who challenge and transfix. One of the tasks of any art that overcomes self-admiration, Hoban hints, is to celebrate the otherness of other people. Orff returns to the Apple corps and the craft of the comic-strip, aware that the artist's path through the underworld will be strewn with bereavements and banalities.

Mythic revisionism remains a high-risk business for any author in search of a character. *The Medusa Frequency* comes off because its lush Orphic lyricism and self-mocking comedy always match and never crush each other. In the halls of Hoban's Hades you hear the tunes of Offenbach as clearly as the verse of Rilke. □

The motherland

Richard Bush

She got me back, the old country;
After years spent passing through
The northern stations, sitting around
In city pubs where you feel you
And your kind unwelcomed by the sound

Of muffled, hidden speech; got me
Looking on the last stretch half-sad,
Looking on her related towns
Like a prodigal and half-glad
To be back after all the ups and downs.

'Come back to my bosom,' she cries,
'You little bastard.' Worried sick,
Pulling me along to busy shopping,
Her cheap shops, her cleansing hanky lick,
'We'd better fix you up, now you're stopping.'

The walls need washing, cellar's dirty,
Window-frames unsteady and bent —
It rains on, to a teacup chink.
One afternoon when roses' scent
With a blaze of terrace garden pink

Gets me outdoors, I'll pull on a coat
And go up the woodyard and see
How they all are. 'Hello young pup,
Come home then?' Wendy went to Annecy,
Nannying. Well, some of us never grow up.

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FICTION

Our man in Africa

Richard Deveson

Written on a Stranger's Map
ROGER KING *Grafton* £10.95

HUGH FULLER IS that unlovely modern man of destiny, the international aid expert. The West African state of Kangaba, in the unlovely language of his Washington boss, is 'another international basket-case'. Fuller's mission in Kangaba, according to his one-page briefing, is to 'identify the economic and political pressure points' and report back to the aid donors' meeting in December. The mission is going to go wrong, of course; but it does so in an unexpected way. Hours after checking in at his fly-blown hotel, and getting fixed up with his hamburger-nibbling prostitute, Fuller finds himself beginning to go native.

Fuller is a liberal-intentioned former academic with a wife and teenage children in Newbury whom he never sees. Once upon a time he was charmed and astonished and moved by the countries on which he paid his quasi-divine visitations, but his head has gradually become choked with the detritus of travel and self-doubt. He now sits in the hotel lounge vegetating, daydreaming, unable to work out what is happening to him. Kangaban life starts to take him over and the virtuoso of debt rescheduling ends up in an earthen, windowless village hut with lizards in the thatch, face to face with the ultimate victims of his statistics.

Roger King has done his own deft briefing job on Kangaba. We get corruption, food riots and an uprising. We get the minister, Jacob Cesay, who was once glamorous and irresponsible at Oxford but now, with power, is ill with fear of disfavour and the execution squad. We get Kamara, the young Marxist with his Mercedes and his trainee revolutionaries, and Uncle, the President, an ageing but malignant apparition in a sealed palace. The struggle within this elite is mortal, and yet all three men are in Fuller's power, even from his bush exile, though he is too slow to realise it. Those he fails to protect will be wiped out by the one he fails to undermine. As for the masses — represented by Regina, the prostitute with whom Fuller embarks on a fantasy of marriage — they are finally bought off with a 'rescue package' — and an envelope containing a thousand dollars — respectively. Fuller himself is reclaimed for the West by British troops and, in a tight-lipped irony, by his well-meaning, Samaritans-and-CND wife.

It may sound as though the oppositions in *Written on a Stranger's Map* are a shade too schematic or familiar, and perhaps they are. Certainly in the middle stretch of the book the main narrative is broken up overmuch by bits of explanatory monologue or lecturette to which the mind is loth to attend. More questionable is the plausibility of the central action itself. *Would* a jet-setting financial consultant, however stricken with inertia, be likely to go AWOL? Would his masters allow him to? Still, the move into the interior serves to dramatise starkly the intervention of Western capital into an agrarian African economy, and Roger King describes the landscape and Kangaban village life with fastidiousness and power.

The implicit message of the book is a pessimistic one. It offers little hope that the Kangabas of this world will be able to avoid being trampled into dereliction and brutality, whether they receive Western handouts or not. Fuller's sense of separateness mirrors a wider prospect of drift and despair. Kamara, the revolutionary, escapes to London; standing on a rain-soaked Bayswater Road, he sees that this is where he really has to strike, in the engine-room of his adversary. But the book gives no reason to suppose that he will succeed where Jacob Cesay has already failed. □

DRUGS

From the pulpit

Giampiero Alhadeff

The Global Connection
BEN WHITAKER *Cape* £16
Narcomania
MAREK KOHN *Faber* £3.95

THERE ARE FEW subjects guaranteed to produce so much sensational and moralistic humbug as that of drugs. Writers and commentators often seem to ignore the fact that, as a species, we stand out for the perseverance with which we have experimented with every conceivable root, vegetable, fruit and chemical to produce a formidable range of substances with which to dull pain, cure illness, transcend reality or just have fun.

Ben Whitaker's **The Global Connection: The Crisis of Drug Addiction** is a widely, if at times innacurately, researched book, which, despite protestations to the contrary, is both sensational and moralistic. It is meant to be the definitive textbook about drugs and attempts to cover everything from nicotine to heroin, from crop to fix. No stone(d) is left unturned as Whitaker surveys the economic, political and legislative scenes, as well as commenting on the different methods of treatment. But, in attempting to cover so much, he exposes his lack of knowledge and understanding — and produces a badly written book which, in part, feels as though it had been produced by a committee of fanatics against drug abuse.

A morass of not always intelligible figures, quotes and anecdotes hang together only in so far as they try to persuade the reader how dire the situation has become. Whitaker does not seem to have grasped such important issues as the difference between detoxification from opioids (nor how it is generally achieved) and the fundamentally different option of not detoxifying but continuing to prescribe to an addict without reduction (maintenance prescribing). The book is therefore often sloppy in its analysis and explanations.

To be fair, Whitaker should be complimented for tackling the central question of how controlling society should be about drug use. Should we adopt a permissive position on drugs and, therefore, allow individuals to consume whatever substances they wish whatever the consequences? Or should we take total responsibility and protect individuals against themselves? Unfortunately, however, he does not differentiate clearly enough between a drug user, a drug abuser and a drug addict; and this failure, coupled with his lack of understanding of the excitement and attractions of drug use, render his analysis moralistic to the point of no longer being useful.

A simple paraphrase of the book goes something like this: alcohol and nicotine are immensely more harmful than heroin and cocaine and, were they to be introduced today, surely would be banned. Yes, it is true that prohibition has never worked and that the gamut of measures ranging from crop substitution to crop eradication are less than effective. It is also true that someone somewhere in the third world will always want to produce heroin for profit and not even the 'lining of the whole coast of Britain with custom officials' will stop its importation. But, nonetheless, changing current policies would be too dangerous and might increase availability and use — so let's continue with the same old medicine and have more education of young people, more self-help groups and more and better funded agencies.

It is an innocuous enough argument, which few would want to argue with, but it does not go far enough. What Whitaker does not consider is that societies have, over the centuries, controlled the use and abuse of drugs precisely by *avoiding* the kind of moral stance which underpins much of this book. For example, Bing Spear, the former Chief Inspector for Drugs at the Home Office, has consistently suggested a return to the old 'British System' whereby those addicted to heroin received heroin on prescription. The illegal market would not disappear overnight, but many individuals would be able to live without recourse to crime and prostitution. Similarly, decriminalising possession of small quantities of all drugs would stop us criminalising so many who just happen to consume a drug which society has arbitrarily termed illegal.

Narcomania: On Heroin by Marek Kohn is an altogether less ambitious book which does not pretend to address the issues of social control, or the core difference between nicotine, prescribed tranquillisers, alcohol and heroin. It is not a book about the heroin 'problem' but a polemic to discover 'what all the fuss is about'. The author is clear that heroin addiction, 'that monomaniacal dependency which threatens so much of the fabric of the addict's life, is a dreadful thing', but he is equally clear that most people who use the drug survive.

Kohn is absolutely right when he says that drugs are ultimately controlled by culture rather than law. The central failure of his book is that he does not attempt to discuss society's response to heroin within the context of its attitudes to a wide range of other drugs. By focusing too tightly on heroin, he fails to make the vital connection that this over-regimented society is scared by the fantasy that so many of its youth are using drugs — which, it believes, places them beyond its control. The evidence of history, well documented in this book, clearly indicates that proscriptive measures are introduced and invoked only when the social order

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is felt to be threatened. Instead of homing in on this axiomatic truth about society and drugs, which is so well supported by the evidence he presents us with, Kohn attempts a Lacanian structural analysis of heroin to demonstrate the mythology of the drug. I found it hard to relate his argument to what I know of heroin.

The book is steeped in the history of opium and the more recent heroin (discovered at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington in 1874). It charts the Victorians' love affair with narcotics and the long, British involvement with promoting and protecting the opium trade (up to 1939). It also makes an important link between some forms of anti-drug propaganda and racism. Kohn's chapter on the introduction of the 'evil oriental fluid' from China (tea to you and me) makes the latter point abundantly clear. Despite the narrowness of its scope, it is a knowledgeable and delightful book, so full of detail and surprises that I soon forgave its Lacanian aberrations. □

MEMOIRS

Passion's fruit

Alison Hennegan

The Memoirs of Ethel Smyth
ETHEL SMYTH introd. RONALD CRIGHTON *Viking* £16.95

'WHEN THE ORCHESTRA was tuning for my first Beethoven symphony I remember trembling all over like a horse at covert side and being far too agitated to note the themes.'

So the 60-year-old Ethel Smyth recalled her 19-year-old self, newly arrived in the Leipzig of 1877, desperate to embark upon the musical education she'd forced her belligerent but ultimately defeated father to grant her. (All very well for General Smyth to kick in the panels of a stubbornly locked bedroom door: behind it his intransigent daughter's hunger strike continued . . .) And how typical of her, 40 years later, to use the language of the hunting field to describe the unbearable tension with which she awaited a supreme aesthetic revelation. Music and sport she loved with equal passion. The former often made her incomprehensible to the late-Victorian garrison society of Aldershot where she spent her youth and large chunks of adulthood. The sport bewildered a succession of cultivated, elegant and wealthy women, the Empress Eugénie among them, who acted the demanding dual role of Gracious Patron and Best Beloved. (Dame Ethel was always refreshingly frank about her 'wild passions for girls and women a great deal older than myself' — for those considerably younger, too: Virginia Woolf was her last great love.)

Early in the aspiring young composer's development, German well-wishers noted, with foreboding, that 'an inordinate flow of passion in three directions — sport, games, friendship', threatened her career with constant interruptions. And, in part, their fears were well founded. But only in part. As this composite memoir, woven by Ronald Crichton from the nine volumes of autobiography published between 1919 and 1940, makes touchingly clear, Ethel Smyth worked — seriously, intelligently, courageously — against considerable odds. By the time she reached it, Leipzig's Conservatorium had a world-famous name and little else. Its great days under Mendelssohn, its founder, were long past. Also, virulent anti-English feeling was growing steadily. More than one opera house which had promised to produce work by *Die Engländerin* broke its contract because it feared reprisals from audiences or Press.

But at least German music administrators weren't terrified of new music simply because it was new, unlike their English counterparts who refused to programme any piece unless it had already received a European, preferably German, performance.

Time and again Ethel Smyth almost triumphed. But sympathetic conductors died, friendly Kapellmeisters were sacked for peculation, Mahler resigned from the Vienna Opera House just after he'd decided to stage *The Wreckers*, her most important opera.

Early in 1914 the young Bruno Walter was so impressed by *The Wreckers* that he actually promised a production. He even fixed the date: February 15, 1915 . . .

Some of these setbacks might have befallen any composer, especially one determined to write operas in English, and for England, some 50 years before the remarkable operatic rebirth which produced Britten and Tippett. But other obstacles, Ethel knew, and was constantly ridiculed for saying, were the direct consequence of her sex. As *virtuosi*, women musicians had won many battles in the 19th century. Clara Schumann, whose portrait Ethel draws so well here, was not only supreme but also the Supremo — and a thoroughly repressive one — in many parts of German musical society. But composers — such as the Irish-born Augusta Holmès, also vividly evoked in these pages — fared very differently.

Some men helped Ethel Smyth and she acknowledged them gratefully. 'Generous-minded' Sir Henry Wood championed her and women musicians generally. He it was 'who first started mixed bathing in the sea of music'. Beecham waived conducting fees. And Henry Brewster, the only man she ever loved romantically, provided several libretti and years of steady emotional support. But throughout her long life it was women who made study, development, battle and even material existence itself possible — and she said so, loudly and often. Eugénie subsidised concerts, copyists' fees, music-printers' bills. Madame de Bülow interceded with her formidably anti-English husband, the German Chancellor, and even enlisted the Kaiser's support. Mary Dodge gave her a life pension, much needed by a composer who lived until 1944, and the age of 86, and who had been going steadily deaf since 1914.

Ironically Ethel Smyth is better known now as an author, an autobiographer, than a composer: a fact she already acknowledged sadly in *As Time Went On* . . . (1936). But slowly, aided by the current revival of interest in the English musical renaissance and by fresh feminist impetus in musical scholarship, her work is beginning to be performed and recorded. Possibly that wouldn't surprise its creator: '. . . someday, I may make friends, musically, with those I cannot get at in my lifetime.' □

PUBLISHING

Workers' booktime

Mervyn Jones

Cuba didn't have a publishing house before the Castro revolution; today, an indigenous literature flourishes, even in unlikely places

THIS HOT MORNING I arrive at the Corona cigar factory in an old district of Havana in good time for the reader (*el lector*). It was in the mid-19th century that Cuban cigar workers got the idea of enlisting a man to read aloud to them while they worked, paying him by a whip-round from their own slender wages. As the cigars were and still are rolled by hand, there was no distracting noise of machinery. Employers disliked the custom — partly on the grounds that it promoted inattention, partly because some of the books chosen contained subversive thoughts — and sometimes forbade it. On at least one occasion, the workers went on strike to get their reader readmitted. Today, under socialism, the tradition continues, with the reader now a state employee earning an average industrial wage.

While waiting, I ask the reader's name, which is O'Farrell. 'Must be Irish,' I say. Everyone

Richard Dawkins
winner of the 1987
Royal Society of Literature
Heinemann Award
for
THE BLIND WATCHMAKER
'. . . enchantingly witty . . . pleasurably intelligible to the scientifically illiterate'
Hermione Lee in
The Observer
ISBN 0 582 44694 5 £12.95 hardback
Longman

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smilingly agrees: 'Yes, yes, Irish.' There's a loud buzz of excitement from the 700 workers, mostly women, when O'Farrell appears (15 minutes late like everybody in Cuba). He's unmistakeably a black man, descended from a slave who — as often happened — was given the surname of the plantation owner. Now 65 years old, René O'Farrell has been reading every working day for 50 years. He has his eye on possible successors, he tells me, but has no plans to retire.

In a deep voice, full of expression, he starts to read from a novel called *Ground Level*, by Luisa Gonzalez, the story of a poor girl growing up in Costa Rica. The next book lined up is a thriller about a Cuban Intelligence agent who penetrates the CIA.

Generally, workers suggest books or bring books which they've bought and read. O'Farrell puts in three stints during the day, reading the book for 45 minutes and newspaper or magazine articles for a total of 90 minutes. When I asked him whether he reads a book in his spare time, he replied emphatically: '*Ninguno*!' ('Never a one!'). However, he belongs to an oral history group to which he contributes family memories.

Cuba is a country without much of a literary heritage. The strongest tradition is poetic and is related to the *trova*, or ballad — a form with roots in Spain. The singer is called *el trovadór* and Cubans, when speaking English, refer to him as 'the troubadour'. Prose traditions are more recent, which is understandable when you realise that until the 1959 revolution Cuba had literally not one publisher; writers had to make direct arrangements, at their own expense, with printers. Novelists, starting with Alejo Charpentier, mostly lived abroad (Paris by choice). There was also no dramatic literature to speak of, since the only theatre was the opera house where singers like Caruso or Patti gave a few performances as a spin-off from an American season.

Another morning, I'm at the spacious white mansion which houses the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists to meet Lisandro Otero, best-known among Cuban novelists and active in running the Union. Cuba now has an array of novelists and short-story writers, working in a variety of genres, with science fiction much in vogue at present. Books are cheap, the provision of bookshops is good and an established novelist can expect a sale of about 10,000 (in a population of ten million).

It's just about possible for such a writer to make a living from Cuban royalties, publication in other Hispanic countries (probably Mexico or Argentina) and intermittent journalism. But in practice almost all writers have other jobs — teaching, or in the administration of 'cultural institutions', or in TV and radio, or on a magazine. The Diplomatic Service is also popular. Cuban writers feel their isolation intensely and are glad of a chance to spend a few years abroad.

Otero phones to say that he's having trouble with his car and will get along as soon as possible. I chat with Nancy Morejón, an up-and-coming poet. She's young, black and readily talkative. Her job is with the Centre for Caribbean Studies and she specialises in contact with the anglophone West Indies; hence she talks in a snappy, racy, Jamaican-style English. Last year, she was in Britain to meet the West Indian writers who live here.

'What are the themes in your poetry?' I inquire. Nancy hesitates, favours me with a smile and replies: 'Let's say erotic relations.' She enlarges on this to explain that she's interested in how these relations were repressed or distorted under slavery. Recently, in the course of launching a new collection of poems, she was the guest on a TV programme hosted by a very popular troubadour. As a result, she's greeted by strangers in the street and her book has sold 4,000 copies — about the tops for poetry.

Otero turns up. He has held a post with the Cuban Embassy in London, put in a lot of time researching in the British Museum Library and produced a novel set in the English Civil War, with Lilburne and Winstanley among the characters. Sad to say, it hasn't been translated. He's now working on a lengthy saga dealing with a Cuban family between 1820 and the 1959 revolution; the theme, he says, is the evolution of Cuban identity.

According to Otero, patterns in the Cuban novel since the revolution have conformed to periods that can be correlated with decades. In the 1960s, novels had a strong documentary basis. In most cases, the purpose was to describe the poverty and injustice of the old Cuba in a way that wouldn't have been safe at the time. In the 1970s, the dominant theme was that of conflict — the Bay of Pigs, the sporadic fighting against counter-revolutionaries in the Sierra Escambray which continued until 1965, the covert struggle against infiltrators and saboteurs. But, in the 1980s, with a new generation of writers whose memories are those of a peaceful Cuba, the novels have become much more personal. 'Even the epics are intimate,' Otero remarked. The Bildungsroman is a popular form; a much-praised example, by Jésus Diaz, is entitled *The Beginning of the Earth*.

What about 'magic realism', the style that we've learned to regard as the hallmark of Latin-American literature? Yes, it has had a powerful influence in Cuba, especially since Gabriel García Márquez now spends much of his time here. (Anyway, Cubans point out, the true father of magic realism was Charpentier.) As one Cuban put it to me, any good novel should be a metaphor.

The idea of ambiguity, too, catches the Cuban imagination. Take, for instance, a play by Abilio Estévez called *The Truthful Death of Juan Clemente Zenea*. Zenea (real name) was a double agent who served both the Spanish rulers and the rebels in the period before independence. He was shot by the Spanish, but nobody knows what his loyalties really were. In the play, a modern researcher gets more and more confused by the conflicting evidence until he actually *becomes* Zenea and lives through the uncertainties. The enigma is resolved, but Estévez doesn't claim that his answer is any more 'truthful' than other possibilities.

Finally, two more poets. Mario Martinez Sobrino has lately returned to Havana from a spell in the Embassy in Paris. He takes me to the best restaurant in Havana and we talk in French, mostly about Lacan and the politics of psycho-analysis. We could be in Paris, with one difference — he declines to drink the only wine available, which is Bulgarian, so we stick to Cuban beer.

Eliseo Diego — 67 years old, extremely courteous and gentle in manner — invites me to his home. Unless I'm much mistaken, he has lived in the house all his life. The walls are lined with books — a library that I'd love to browse in — except for a panel of Phiz and Cruikshank illustrations to Dickens. Diego speaks in a perfectly correct and idiomatic English for which he keeps apologising — 'It's frightfully rusty, I'm afraid.' It appears that his mother, though Cuban, was a passionate Dickens fan and produced a tag from Pickwick or Micawber for every occasion. Asked about his own tastes, Diego gives me a deprecating smile and says: 'I'm really frightfully fond of Max Beerbohm, I'm afraid.' When I leave, I have to look at the nearest revolutionary slogan to remind myself that it's 1987 and I'm in Castro's Cuba.

Back at the hotel, I peruse the book I've been given: a collection of Diego's poems, with the original on the left-hand pages and an English translation (revised by the author) on the right. It confirms what I felt in his presence; here is a considerable poet. I'll conclude with the last verse in the volume:

No poseyendo más
entre cielo y tierra que
mi memoria, que este tiempo;
decido hacer my testimento.
Es éste: les dejo
el tiempo, todo el tiempo.

Not owning more
between this heaven and this earth
than my own memory, and time:
it is my will to make a testament.
It's this:
I leave to you
my time, the whole of time. □

Outsiders

Mark Wyatt

You're getting into his big car.
Whoever he is
He's definitely not as sensitive as me.

There are so many things
That no one but I could give you.
I feel numb

Wondering if you've already made love to him.
Watching you together now
I'm no better than a tramp

Excavating rubbish, shivering.

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Child abuse

Peter Tatchell, London SE1
Bea Campbell's commentary on the Cleveland child abuse row (*NS* 31 July) demonstrates how the New Right has succeeded in dictating the terms of public debate about sexuality. What has been almost totally ignored in the current controversy is the recognition that sexual abuse and sexual repression go hand in hand. By keeping children in a state of sexual ignorance, fear and guilt, society makes them more — not less — vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.

Many child abuse victims do not report sexual assaults because our culture teaches them that sex is sordid, shameful and sinful. Overcome with embarrassment and humiliation, they remain silent and the abusers remain free. Furthermore, the social taboo and stigma associated with sex not only results in much abuse going unreported, it also causes more long-term psychological damage to the victims than the physical abuse itself.

To reduce sexual abuse and help its victims, it is therefore imperative that children be educated about sex in a non-moralising manner from a very early age. If children can grow up free from sexual anxiety and guilt, they are likely to feel more confident and willing to say 'no' to unwanted sexual advances and to report the perpetrators of abuse. Sexual enlightenment and emancipation is thus a prerequisite for tackling child abuse and healing the scars of those who have been its victims.

J. W. Tiptaft, Hawley, Kent
Surely what is required in the whole matter of child abuse is the strongest attempt at diagnostic objectivity, not an ideological polemic. Ms Campbell seems so weighted down with a priori feminist baggage that she seems as incapable of taking an objective view as the Catholic Church was of assessing the worth of Galileo.

If some feminists want to go right over the top, I suppose they're free to do so, but you seem to endorse it all quite uncritically — with your cover splash 'The hounding of Dr Higgs' and what-not. It's all very dispiriting.

Tony Benjamin, Bristol
I felt Ms Campbell's article swerved into a sexual populism of a post-feminist kind by its inclusion of the quote from a 'prominent Tory woman' who had 'murmured coyly, as if this was a subversive thought, "I don't think men should be let anywhere near children. Bringing up children should be left to women".' This is, of course, about as subversive as the FT index. Surely it is the alienation of most men from really caring for their children from birth that creates the conditions where they can later exploit love and trust for their own sexual purposes?

Involved parenthood, with its joys and frustrations, is a dramatically awakening experience of direct emotions for men able to try it, bringing human values and feelings back into the void left by a masculine upbringing. Too many men only know loving as sexual and thus assume sex to be loving. The implication of the inclusion of this quote is to presume that male sexuality is inherently (biologically?) rapacious, while ignoring the powerful, destructive social forces that make such a sexuality possible and indeed likely. This presumption closes off a great many ways of addressing the social origins of child sexual abuse.

Peggy Tyler, Felixstowe, Suffolk
Removing a young child from its mother should be the last resort because it causes the child intense emotional suffering and quite often lasting damage. So why punish the child? If a young child shows physical symptoms of sexual abuse the answer is to keep the father away from the family home while investigations are made.

Ombud

Oonagh Lahr, London N10
I am fed up with 'ombudsman' (*NS* 31 July Chris Smith) a word eternally conveying the impression that it takes a man (of course) to sort out justice. If you don't like Ombudsperson, say Ombud thus reminding people that sorting out problems is not the exclusive province of the sex that usually created them in the first place.

More power to Pearce's pen

Roger MacDonald, Ayr
I hope I am not your only reader concerned that Mr George Galloway's first published statement (*NS* 24 July) since his election as an MP is a call for censorship. What is it about the air of Westminster that turns perfectly decent ambitious young Labourites into first-class pompous asses? All the stuff I have been reading or hearing from the new intake of left-wing careerists is so full of windy self-importance that Mrs Thatcher must die laughing at the easy ride she can expect from such bloated egos. More power to Ed Pearce's pen as he pricks 'these bubbles of self-esteem'. Not since James Fenton has the *New Statesman* had so good a writer about Westminster. And as a Scot myself may I say to George Galloway that our nation's greatness lies in a tradition of hard work, disciplined living and thinking, and an avoidance of Tartan chauvinism.

Labour papers

J. L. Whitty, General Secretary, The Labour Party
On 22 July, the National Executive Committee endorsed by 20 votes to 6 the package of measures which I had put forward in order to face up to the Party's mounting financial crisis in the wake of the general election defeat. This package also presents a major opportunity to carry forward the restructuring of the Party machine, especially in the regions, to ensure that we have the right people in the right jobs, able to mount an effective campaign in the early 1990s.

In order that the Party can return to the overdraft position of recent years, cuts of £600,000 against this year's budget are required, and of £1,150,000 against the projected 1988 budget. The former target is being achieved through immediate economy measures, such as the non-filling of vacancies. The latter, however, is far more difficult. And it is in this context that the NEC has recommended the closure of *Labour Weekly* and *New Socialist*, subject to the consideration of all other options which meet the same financial targets during the period of consultation in which we are now engaged.

Ben Pimlott writes of a 'contemptuous rejection' of *Labour Weekly* (Letters 24 July). However, last year the NEC carried out a full review of *Labour Weekly*. The only option put forward by the staff — or anyone else — was a promotion campaign, of £20,000, which the NEC financed. The results have been extremely disappointing. *Labour Weekly*'s long-term decline in sales — from 18,000 in 1981 to around 13,500 now — has barely been dented by recent promotion, which did little more than offset the impact of the recent price rise. Party members have voted with their pockets by not buying it. Because of this, *Labour Weekly* made a loss of around £150,000 in 1986.

Pimlott's answer, 'a reduction in costs', has specifically been rejected by *Labour Weekly* staff, who have constantly argued that the staffing — the major element in costs — cannot be reduced if a weekly newspaper is to be produced. Indeed, I proposed limited redeployment of *Labour Weekly* journalists before the campaign, to bolstering the election press-desk — but this was repeatedly rejected.

James Curran, meanwhile, writes of the 'reprieve' of *New Socialist**. In fact, the NEC did *not* endorse the proposed arrangement with Russell Press to which he refers. Nevertheless, that 'arrangement', and any other options for *New Socialist*, will be considered in detail during the consultation period. It is, at the very least, an option. *No* option has yet been advanced in the case of *Labour Weekly* — other than indefinite and heavy losses which would almost certainly require further staff cuts to be borne elsewhere.

I, and the NEC, deeply regret the need to propose such hard decisions, especially so soon after the magnificent effort of all staff during the election. We will consider any and all alternatives which are put forward. I trust that those criticising these proposals will also be able to put forward such alternatives.

* Corrections by Curran to his claims of a 'reprieve' could not be incorporated for technical reasons. — *Ed.*

Conrad Jameson, London SW7
O spare *New Socialist* from its friends! The chairman of the Editorial Advisory Committee, Lewis Minkin, tells us hand on heart (Letters 7

'And ever more came out of that same door wherein I went' . . .

This was the plaint of a man who could not escape the common round of conventional answers to his questions. Perhaps he was stuck in beliefs — maybe even sacred ones — but he was stuck. Is there no way out?

Perhaps; if you would like to see, write to:

The Blavatsky Trust (B)
P.O. Box 16, London W3 6HS

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August) that he never knew until recently that the figures for a monthly were massaged or that the journal has lost 70 per cent of its party sellers. But why, you wonder, didn't he make it his business to know or know as a matter of right? Because he is a figurehead appointed in effect by the editor. Minkin asks us to write to the NEC and plead for the preservation of the journal. And so we should. But one of the things we should also plead for is an NEC-appointed independent chairman with real powers.

The most recent editor, Stuart Weir, is equally beguiling — and equally dangerous — with his cries of *mea culpa*. How admirably honest, you think, for him to admit that he shouldn't have used phoney figures to show that a monthly would break even — until you realise he is only setting you up for an alibi: as a readers' survey showed, he says, the journal had been forecast to decline and losses were in any case inevitable once the NEC withdrew its subsidies. But a readers' survey never forecast such a decline — and I should know as I devised it — and the subsidies referred to were derisory: a laughable £1500 launch fund plus a free use of offices for a year.

Weir tries the same trick again in admitting to the mistake of failing to speak out against Scargillism but then excusing himself by saying that he was only trying to spare the feelings of mining communities. Weir's reticience was in fact an after-thought. In my own article I quoted a letter from a *New Socialist* editor saying that its silence about Scargillism was mealy-mouthed. Weir wrote it. He must have forgotten — but forgotting is only to be expected in a psychology Freud once described as 'confessing to the lesser crime'. The important mistake Weir never mentions: allowing a single faction — call it Bennite, post-Bennite or what you will — to so usurp authority it could not only tamper with self-assessment but censor ideas it found disagreeable.

Even more alarming is the befriending defence (*NS* 24 July) by the first editor of *New Socialist*, James Curran. *Of course* the Labour Party shouldn't control its own journal, he tells us with stylish *chutzpah*, and *of course* the journal should have been Bennite. The Labour Party and the broader labour movement are too illiberal to be allowed control, he argues, and Bennism in any event represented the views of most party workers at the time.

You wonder how it is that a Bennite movement bragging about democratic control should have so little time for democratic accountability or democratic guarantees of fair play. But you also wonder how it is that a marxist editor backed up by marxist writers should claim intellectual leadership of a popular labour movement. Wouldn't the need for a popular front lead to faking and fantasy in editorial matters — and of just the kind that Curran himself betrays inadvertently when he tells us that, long before I myself alleged, Bennites had switched from an Alternative Economic Strategy to a policy of joint European reflation? But joint with whom? The new centre-right government of Portugal? Curran's blithe unawareness that there might be anything less than transparent about a hopeless policy is testimony all of its own that *New Socialist* needs not just a reprieve but wholesale reform.

Partial justice

G. W. Linton, Tyne and Wear

Chris Smith MP is wrong (*NS* 31 July). Justice has patently *not* been done: there are still officers serving in the police force who most singularly failed in their duty and behaved in a criminal manner over a number of years with regard to the Holloway Road incident. They have faced neither criminal nor disciplinary proceedings. Until they do so the matter will not and must not be laid to rest.

Peckham — the truth

Cllr Mike Geater, St Giles Branch, Peckham Labour Party

I am conscious that this is the silly season, but the article by Bob Smyth (*NS* 31 July) must not go unchallenged. On both occasions, his expulsions from the Southwark Labour Group between 1978 and 1982 were because of a principle in opposition against 'Tammany Hall' tactics of the then Labour Group leadership, for which I along with Smyth and other colleagues were also expelled.

The Fabianesque alibi he uses for his resignation as a member of the council is pure fantasy. Although elected unopposed as deputy leader, Smyth swiftly opted out of all responsibilities and fled from the Town Hall to escape the ravages of surcharge. Claiming that little was achieved during the first year of the new council Smyth must shoulder some of the blame; he rarely made any contribution to debate or policy decisions.

Smyth's allegation about Margaret Prosser's complaints to the General Secretary about the activities of the 'macho tendency' is untrue, as all members of Peckham CLP will confirm. As chair of the Peckham Party she attended only four meetings of the General Committee in over two years — hardly time to perceive any tendency, macho or otherwise.

The attempt by Smyth to involve the present Peckham Labour Club with the allegations at Nye Bevan Lodge are wide of the mark and deserve contempt. Does he realise that the report has been referred to the DPP and he is therefore pre-empting decisions on the allegations at the Home? Smyth must also be aware that as a result of that report, disciplinary action is taking place, the outcome of which could be prejudiced by his article.

The suggestion that the National Executive's role is '. . . policing maverick councils such as Southwark' smacks of the tactics of Hitler and Mussolini. The National Executive's role is not to dictate policy to any local council; councillors are elected to do just that. Therefore the majority members of Southwark Council intend to do our best — unlike Bob Smyth who scampered away at the faintest sound of gunfire.

Alma martyr

David M. Duckers, Driffield, Yorks

If Christian Wolmar dislikes his, and my, old university so much, why bother to go back (*NS* 31 July) other than to indulge in some form of radical 'bourgeois triumphalism'? As he took an upper second, I was surprised he had not worked out that in the 1960s it was a haunt of premature yuppies and now terminal dinkies.

On the head of a pin

Dr Julian Lewis, Policy Research Associates

Now that Duncan Campbell has run out of tortuous footnotes to letters from Ray Whitney MP, Sir Peter Blaker MP and myself, up pops David Leigh of the *Observer* forlornly trying (Letters 7 August) to keep Campbell's story alive with irrelevant nitpicking points.

This is predictable: Leigh was one of the very first journalists wrongly to claim that information gathered by ex-MI5 officer Cathy Massiter had been used by Conservative ministers in their widely-reported exposure of CND leftists in the run-up to the 1983 general election.

I have taken a great deal of trouble to confirm that Miss Massiter has made no such claim. Nor has Leigh been able to cite a single piece of information used by Conservative ministers as originating from MI5 rather than Conservative researchers. When I challenged him to do so, during his 'investigation' earlier this year, he suggested just two items — the newspaper-cutting sources for which I was immediately able to tell him without even bothering to check my files.

If Leigh can belatedly persuade Miss Massiter to support his claim that her MI5 material was used by Conservative ministers, then he would indeed have a case to argue for an inquiry. In the absence of this, it ill becomes him falsely to accuse me of changing my story, when he is actually inventing his own.

Eating out on a pension

Betty Feeney, Maldon, Essex

It made me furious and sick to read Colin Spencer's recommendation (*NS* 17 July) of a dinner for two at £40, my weekly pension; of a new vegetarian restaurant in Soho (I am a vegetarian) where a meal costs *only* £8 a head. If ever I have a meal out it's on pension and shopping day — egg and chips in our local serve-yourself which costs about £1.

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The death of Tory Scotland

WHY HAS the Tory vote in Scotland fallen from 50½ per cent in 1955 to 24 per cent in 1987? It is from 1970 that events seem to go wrong for the Tories. Then with 38 per cent support they first supported lukewarm devolution and then changed their minds several times under the influence of Ted Heath and Lord Home.

The reason for the slow and recent death of Tory Scotland seems to be founded in this, political history, rather than social demographics.

W.L. Miller in *The End of British Politics?* (1981) and *The Re-emergence of Periphery* (1984) looked at the Labour bias in Scotland. A Glasgow University psephologist, he discounted the three obvious points: a historic trend, economic decline and manufacturing/public sector size and housing tenure bias. This should account for an 8 per cent difference in Labour's support in Scotland. The 1987 election gave the Tories a 16 per cent lead in England, and on class bias they should have been 8 per cent *ahead* of Labour in Scotland, when they were in real votes 18 per cent *behind*.

Class and social background is, therefore, working in a completely different way in Scotland from England. Council house sales have happened and been popular, rate-capping has been in force since 1982 (two years before England) and there have been Scottish share offers like TSB Scotland. The working classes of Scotland have changed and partly dissolved, but not disintegrated. The yuppie, filofax, homeowning belt of Scotland, of Strathkelvin and Edinburgh Central, is Labour.

It does seem, and this is the only logical explanation, that after 1970 and during the 1974-79 Labour government, Labour became identified with Scotland and the elusive idea of Scottish nationalism.

The Tories have slowly since 1970 and more so under Mrs Thatcher been seen as 'anti-Scottish', and as a South of England regional party. Private polling by the Scottish Tories before the election found three reasons — Norman Tebbit and his attacks on the BBC, Lord James Goold, party chairman in Scotland and Tory opposition to devolution (*Radical Scotland* 25, Feb/Mar 1987).

Regions 1979-87

	Percentage change in vote	
	Con.	Lab.
Scotland	−23.3	+1.9
Wales	−9.2	−5.3
North	−9.9	−5.6
Midlands	+0.1	−22.4
South	0	−29.5
Nationally	−2.7	−16.7

Sources: 1979 election: Butler and Kavanagh, 1980. 1987 election: Peter Kellner, *Independent*, 13 June 1987.

Can Scotland be the 'dissenting community' that fights and wins — unlike the Ulster Unionists, the GLC and the miners? To achieve this, we will need to build broad support in and out of Scotland. None of the above took their causes seriously outside of their popular bases — Scotland's rights will need to come centre stage from Britain's periphery. The support of the 50 Scottish Labour MPs will be crucial in this, along with the 12 Alliance/Scottish National Party MPs. But it will not be enough. High politics is not going to win.

It will have to involve all Scotland's pro-devolution parties, including the Greens and Communists, the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly, community groups, the Church of Scotland and others, a large amount of the 76 per cent excluded by the Tories from power. It is a must to stress, as the GLC did, the issue of *democracy*.

It is obvious that Scotland is moving in a similar *economic* direction to England, but with a different set of *social* ideals. Scotland is moving towards a Scandinavian social democracy, England into an American hypercapitalism.

Scotland has a dominant left-of-centre party, a powerful but split bourgeoisie, a few progressive industrialists who are disgusted by the City, and a small, subservient, class-based (as in non-national) Conservative Party.

The attachment of Scottish people to being 'British' is not logical, but emotional. It is borne of 280 years of common heritage. However, if Scotland's democratic rights are ignored, this will have to be carefully re-examined. The mind would have to overrule the heart.

Gerry Hassan

The Social movement

ONLY two political movements will remain electorally relevant as Britain enters the 21st century. One is the Enterprise movement, the other the Social. The former advocates unfettered markets and low taxation, freeing personal wealth to fund private health care, education and pensions. The latter prefers supervised markets and tax levels capable of financing universal social services.

The Enterprise movement has a popular champion in Mrs Thatcher, an effective political vehicle in her Conservative Party and powerful backers in commerce and finance. The Social movement has a potentially popular champion in Mr Kinnock but currently lacks an electorally successful vehicle. Yet it can fairly be called a movement, for millions of Britons of all incomes and backgrounds subscribe to its aims and share its values.

Some argue that those millions should be represented in and out of parliament by a rainbow alliance of broad left parties and factions. The rainbow would range from pale pink to dark red with a dash of green, black and tartan. Its elements would make some sort of non-aggression pact before a general election and swap pledges about the introduction of proportional representation. As a result, so the theory goes, a minority Labour government would be elected and kept in power by the rest of the rainbow.

Later, with the arrival of PR, a true Euro-style coalition of the left would emerge. Probably, one of its constituents would be a party of 'full-blooded' socialists free at last to break with Labour's ruling revisionists and march proudly into parliament under their own banner. The fundamental flaw of this technicolour dream is, of course, that the electorate will not buy it. The SDP-Liberal merger fiasco has confirmed voters' doubts about expedient alliances.

So it is almost certain that the largest minority of Britons will continue to vote Tory until the emergence of a solid, single party acceptable to the *whole* of the Social movement. The clear duty of the left is to construct such a vehicle. Political common sense and the fate of Dr Owen suggest that only a reformed Labour Party can fit the bill.

The necessary ingredients of Labour's reformation have long been known and reviled. But they remain the same: a constitutional break with the unions, the scrapping of the appallingly worded and near-meaningless Clause IV and a review of the impossible absolutism of instant unilateral nuclear disarmament.

If Labour can bite these three bullets, the Liberal/Social Democratic Alliance will have no reason to exist.

The trade unions must find their own route into the next century. It will probably involve a redistribution of representation based on entire industries rather than trade or craft. As well as protecting members, the new unions would concentrate on offering them a full range of legal and financial services. This would be a boon to workers employed by small, struggling companies and faced with a bewilderingly aggressive market of insurances, pensions, mortgages and 'investments'. These unions would support a Labour Party pledged to introduce a positive Bill of Rights defending people at work and in the marketplace.

Factions across the whole spectrum of the centre and left sneer at this broad scenario as they each apply their own tired ideological litmus tests. Some argue that the new Labour Party would be no true alternative to the Tories. It would be merely a 'wet' wing of the Establishment like the American Democrats. The new unions would be employers' 'sweethearts'.

Yet the only option offered is cupped hands around the precious candles of Marx, Gramsci, Tawney and Keynes while the Thatcherite hurricane transforms the social and political landscape. Somehow, those flickering candles must burn as one if Britain is ever to become a true national community and not just 50 million people sharing an island. History won't care whether the flame is called democratic socialism or social democracy.

James Anslow

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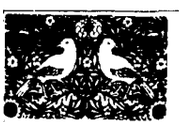

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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

At first sight

Diana Eden

FROM TIME TO TIME, for reasons of pretension and self-defence, I set aside my Mills and Boon romantic fiction and take up a book which I can publicly own up to having read. For in life — as in Mills and Boon — appearances are all.

So, though *Chance Meetings, Ever After* and, particularly, the climatic extremes of *Reluctant Paragon* (wherein beauteous, snub-nosed Eleanor meets arrogant, aquiline James and feels 'cubes of ice cascading down her spine' before, in the next sentence, 'the expression of hostility in his heavy-lidded eyes burned indelibly in her mind') . . . though, I say, these classics hold me in their knicker-wetting thrall, sometimes I indulge in brief flirtations with more vaunted literary toffs.

I recently embraced (my heart fluttering like a captive dove's) the darkly handsome William Hazlitt, a critic brilliant and urbane yet vulnerable, sensitive and boyish. I also succumbed (my heart beating like an ensnared lark's) to the ruggedly attractive J. Mortimer Q.C., a writer brilliant and urbane yet vulnerably sensitive and — oh alright, *alright*.

Conspicuously reading the former's essays and the latter's autobiography — in a desperate bid to impress my fellow travellers on the tube — I was startled to discover (my heart pounding like an imprisoned plover's) that both had given thought to the subject of Appearance.

Hazlitt (who, incidentally, once pronounced: 'It is utterly impossible to persuade an Editor that he is nobody' — I mention this merely to check whether John Lloyd ever reads this column) declares, 'A man's life may be a lie to himself and others: and yet a picture painted of him would probably stamp his true character on the canvas, and betray the secret of posterity. The face tells what we have thought and felt — the rest is nothing.'

I straightaway scrutinised the Circle-line commuters and lo! Instinct-at-first-sight was validated at last. As they disgorged at Temple, each leery, lunching lawyer, each shifty-eyed insider-trader had Avarice engraven deep upon his face.

Mortimer's observations are on the inequalities caused by beauty and they go some way to explain the appeal of Mills and Boon: 'No power on earth can abolish the merciless class distinction between those who are physically desirable and the lonely, pallid, spotted, silent, unfancied majority.'

It is the female half of this majority who take vicarious — and generous — pleasure in the happiness which is, *unswervingly*, the fate of Desirables in romantic fiction. In that respect, the genre is rooted in reality — Virtue may be its own reward, but Beauty gets extraneous payment. The unfair, fair-faced facts are these: pretty female offenders, statistically, get light sentences in court (and pretty female witnesses have been known to have their 'fragrance' judged admissable as evidence); pretty women get access to an expansive range of career and social opportunities; pretty women get to present and make the news; pretty women get to marry princes.

And this is why, when a teacher itemised my daughter's academic strengths and then added to the list 'she's also very pretty!', my heart raced like an unliberated mother hen's. For, sisters forgive me, despite all the feminist decades, now as ever was and ever shall be, when other considerations and qualifications are taken to be equal, then — appearances are all. □

'Celibacy is the only answer'

FIRST PERSON

Talking about m-monochrome

Bill Greenwell

IT STIKES ME that nobody really knows what a 'generation' is. Exactly how long is one supposed to *last*?

About nine or ten years at most, I'd guess, rather than the literal space of a quarter-century or so. The Who were presumably addressing those born somewhere between 1942 (a bit older than them) and 1952 (me). Why is it that I'm so certain that I'm part of their generation, or indeed that I'm the fag end of a generation at all?

I'll tell you what it is. It's monochrome.

It is all very bizarre, and an outrageous claim on behalf of all those born in that decade, but I think that, on one score, we're positively pivotal. We're the last lot whose past was principally in black-and-white. And, if in motion, as on a cine-film, eerily silent.

It's not only the literal snaps, the endless photos of beaches, of hands raised against the sun, of trolley-buses in the background, of corrugated bathing-suits and caps (girls) and slightly outsize shorts (boys), and, dear God, please get me out of this Frank Keating meets Roy Hattersley sentence.

It's the memories, too. One most peculiar phenomenon our lot has been through is discovering that all those American TV shows we watched in the early 1960s were actually originally in *colour*: that Mr Spock had flesh-toned ears, not grey ones.

The prospect of colour television, as I remember, seemed laughable, remote. My cousin had been to the States and seen it. Nobody seriously thought we'd have it here.

The *news* was monochrome. I remember seeing Oswald shot by Ruby in monochrome. I was amazed, during last year's C4 'trial', to see the same film endlessly replayed in colour. What *we* saw was the colour of ash, in all its different tones, when something cropped up on the nightly news. Churchill was buried in black-and-white. Over here, Vietnam was in black-and-white. Biafra, Indonesia, Berlin were black-and-white. *The War Game* was.

And so were the films on the telly. Even (Don't-forget-the) fruitgums were.

Think about it. The majority of our past — you know who we are — is monochromatic. Theirs was, too, but tending to brown; the lot before had sepia. Before them, drawings. Or, more likely, nothing.

There are no records of what our forebears looked like — often beyond our grandparents. (I know that I'm unusual in having possession of about five seconds of film — on 9.5 mm cine, shortly to be transferred to video — of my great-grandfather, and of my father, aged five.) But our descendants will not only know our names, they will quite often be able to conjure us up, in sound as well as in (colour) vision. That's why I think our

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generation is the end of a line. The next lot will have a past to consult.

And surely this will bring about a major change in perception: to take it for granted that a visual and audio record is left of your ancestors. You may have seen the excellent pair of TV plays starring Peter Finch, *The Flipside of Dominick Hyde* and its sequel. One of its most striking images was of a futureworld in which families could replay the images of their past. You could watch your great-grandfather paddling in the rockpools.

As I say, I've seen my father do it; and it is not merely eerie.

It will take about 50 years, and it will be for the generations that succeed us. What will happen is the growth of a much greater understanding of previous generations. We have been confined to dim, crumpled, stilted, browning portraits of our grandparents' generations and further back. They are posed, resolute, unnatural.

'As if out of the end of an event/Waving goodbye/To something that survived it,' as Larkin wrote: that's them. They are irredeemably frozen in the past, divulging nothing. In future, descendants will see ancestors toddle, lope, banter, chunter, tumble and crumble with age. Their voices, benign and banal, will issue normally from their video throats.

McLuhan's global village was a concept dealing with space. The video-recorder will create a tunnel of time.

What this signals is an entirely different kind of society: one for which the past is neither dark nor flickering nor distant. The past will no longer be monochrome. Our generation's single privilege in this respect was the clumsy colour silence of cine. (I've just inherited, and edited, about 30 spools, which is what sparked this piece. In the Summer of Love, I notice, I wore my hair short and had a stupid striped shirt. These spools I'll transfer to video; oddly, this will activate them. The rattle of Standard 8 film through a projector created a strange distance that television is oddly capable of bridging.)

I don't know whether or not nostalgia consoles. About our sort of nostalgia, however, we shall need to become nostalgic. The shock I experienced when seeing the colour footage of the Normandy 1944 landings shot by an American is a shock no one from the future will feel. Our past was printed in black and white and filed away. The past we are presently creating, however, is one that will catch up with the future. □

FOOD

First and foremost

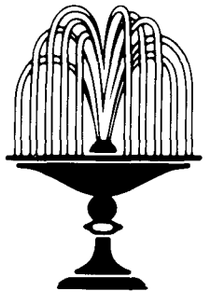
Colin Spencer

IT MAY BE somewhat unusual to consume a full-scale dinner composed entirely of first courses. But in countries where the mezze or the tapas reign, the appetisers are often the best part of the meal. Lebanese mezze are a particularly good example.

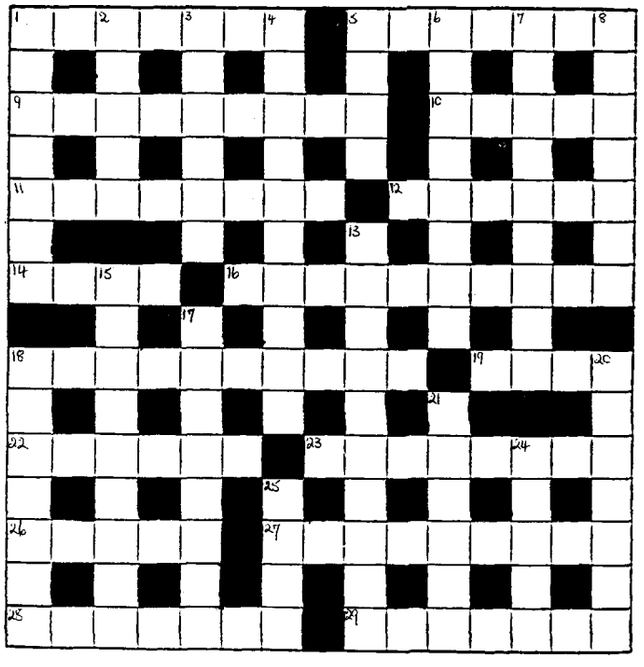
There have been few Lebanese restaurants in London until quite recently. The good news, now, is that you can visit the most flashy in the expensive quarters of London and, if you stick to the mezze, eat like a sultan and still have the taxi fare home. I visited the **Fakhreldine** on Piccadilly, and you can't get more glitzy than that. They are rightly famous for their mezze, with a range of 25 cold appetisers and the same number of hot ones. We ordered ten and washed them down with half a bottle of arak — the most costly item, setting us back £17.

We ate a completely vegetarian meal which was astonishingly varied in flavour and texture,

Weekend Crossword 1567



Prizes: Copies of the *Collins Gem Crossword Dictionary* for the first ten correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1567, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 24 August.



Name_____

Address_____

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ACROSS

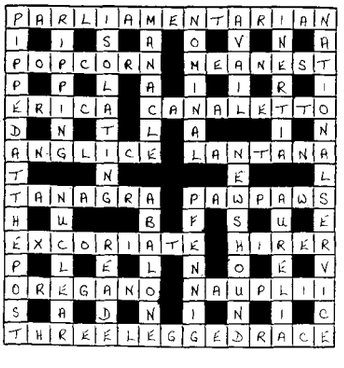
1. Remote settlement for those not in a job (7)
5. Hair removed in action by employers (7)
9. Blanket as used in a pantomime (9)
10. Strikes for shares (5)
11. Something to drink makes an Irishman return to fighting about a note (8)
12. Building for a woman beside a river (6)
14. Helen's mother appears in a pale damask robe (4)
16. Corny expressions of opinion in unofficial tests of strength (5,5)
18. Give Oscar to the finest outside the East, the brute (10)
19. Not choppy where lake enters river (4)
22. Modes of expression which appear in one piece of writing about a historian (6)
23. I permit to include a denial, being uninformed (8)
26. Single-hearted but unsociable person (5)
27. All wonder is hidden from a plain man (9)
28. But on the contrary we share freely (7)
29. Produced and gave up (7)

DOWN

1. M25 piece in examination (7)
2. Go on foot and catch about a thousand (5)
3. Bard who is so looked up to but adult in wickedness (6)
4. Play consisting of essays about a garment (10)
5. Water-colour? (4)
6. New house abroad for an adventurer (8)
7. Players who take part in short race (9)
8. They examine canopies (7)
13. Old man's wise method is a means of getting through (10)
15. Before marriage a number go in for courting (9)
17. Clean, getting the elementary principle without payment (8)
18. Something painful makes me a little bit depressed (7)
20. Grew up with you abroad in a strange dream (7)
21. The container comes on time for the soup (6)
24. Protected without a soft front being put on (5)
25. After a quiet start these diseases provide their own cures (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1565



Prizewinners to 1565

John A. B. Petrie
(Ross-on-Wye)

A. J. Burl
(Shelton Lock, Derby)

D. Berry
(London SW2)

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ranging from kabis — a selection of pickled vegetables — to muhamara — crushed mixed nuts with a hot spicy sauce, and labneh, which is a cheese between feta and haloumi. There were pastries filled with spinach, onions and herbs called fatayer, moutabal, the aubergine and sesame dish we are more familiar with as baba ghannou, and much else. If you are a carnivore, be reassured, Lebanese cooking is meat orientated with a high proportion of lamb minced with spices and excellent offal, sweetbreads and kidneys, including beid ghanam which is grilled lamb testicles with lemon. For main courses, they also have a huge range of lamb, chicken and beef but also tiny red mullet which is a prized delicacy. Much of the food is reminiscent of Greek cuisine but the dishes are more highly spiced and the range far greater.

If you relied on *The Good Food Guide*, you would think that Cardiff was a culinary desert, though the *Budget Guide* lists 16 pubs and restaurants including the Incredible Edible Food Company which no longer exists. However, if you trust the locals, as I did, you would learn of **Gibsons** which has been in existence for 14 years and surely should be in some guide. It is a small restaurant able to seat about 30 people, with imaginative and original dishes made to order. On a hot day, I ate a chilled tomato and peach soup; the pigeon casserole had a heady aroma of rosemary; my companion's steak in filo pastry was both crisp and light with the meat the required pink in the centre — not an easy feat when cooking inside a pastry envelope. A five-course dinner would have cost £15.50 with a choice of several dishes for each course. There were even homemade petit fours and the coffee came decaffeinated if you wished with an alternative choice of herbal teas. Sympathetic service and marvellous value.

In the summer, it's always enjoyable to eat al fresco. Because rain is never far off, few British restaurants spill over on to the pavement, but more are now doing so. One hugely popular restaurant is London's **Café Pelican**, which stretches from St Martins Lane to the back of the Colosseum, handy for pre-theatre snacks and supper. They do a variety of excellent salads, soups, pâtés and timbales, all of which arrive within five minutes and should keep you going through even the longest Wagner. But they will also serve more formal dinners, and their menu is adventurous and inviting.

But it is in our parks where open-air restaurants should proliferate, with fresh food, reasonable prices and relaxed surroundings for the whole family. The Forte's group's **Serpentine** restaurant in Hyde Park is hardly that. Indeed, I cannot quite make out *who* it was designed for, unless it falls in the expense-account hour category, a place for the randy boss to chat up his new temp. It is plush and glittering and, despite the name, few tables have a view of the water. The expensive-looking food is actually moderately priced, yet everything, one feels, must have been pre-cooked in some great central Forte's kitchen and sent out in airline trays. Too much has obviously been frozen, like the crab claws or large prawns. Too much is too frantically busy being trendy — fanned avocado, the ubiquitous trout with almonds, sole véronique or salmon with sorrel sauce. There is a large charcoal grill with prime cuts of Scottish beef. The chateaubriand for two with all the garnishes costs £22. But you could eat two courses, by choosing carefully, for under a tenner.

Café Italien des Amis du Vin will, when the sun shines, also have a few tables on the street. It is part of a chain of restaurants, all of which, once you're inside, can readily convince you that you are somewhere in France. As this particular one serves Italian food in Soho, you might feel somewhat disorientated. But the food here, especially the pasta, is highly delicious and so intense can be the gustatory pleasure that it should serve to re-orientate you firmly to the pleasures of the palate.

Their bucatini pizocchero is pasta cooked in walnut oil with mange tout, baby carrots and spinach. There's a delicious penne zinino — tubes of pasta with baby squid in a thick tomato sauce spiked with chilli and oregano. Or rich spinach and ricotta cheese gnocchi — mistero della casa — fat little soufflé-like mounds sitting in a tomato and cream sauce. They do delicious salads of radicchio and pine kernels, plenty of grilled fish and the Venetian speciality of calves liver and onions. Prices are reasonable; you can eat well for a tenner. □

Fakhreldine, 85 Piccadilly, W1. Tel: (01) 493 3424
Gibsons, 8 Romilly Crescent, Cardiff. Tel: Cardiff 41264
Café Pelican, 45 St Martins Lane, WC2. Tel: (01) 379 0309
Serpentine Restaurant, Hyde Park, W2. Tel: (01) 723 8784
Café Italien des Amis du Vin, 19-23 Charlotte Street, W1. Tel: (01) 636 4174.

Weekend competition

No 2988 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Years ago, *Time and Tide* asked its readers for just one sentence of really superb English prose. We think you could do justice to the complementary task of providing one sentence of really *awful, excruciating* English prose. Max. three attempts per entrant by 26 August.

No 2985 **Set by John Sweetman**

A combination of the opening sentences (or phrases) of reasonably well known novels, to provide a coherent whole.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Wen do you get the time to wach the telly? I can't help wundering. Betwine you, you must have read every book that anywun's ever printed. Opening sentences from Moby Dick, Malone, Adrian Mole . . . from Austen and Beckett and Wodehouse and Grass . . . You make me feel marjinally sick. And no, J. Sweetman, you really *carnt* win in a compertishern you set yourself (though you do get a Spesherl Menshern for using the opening sentence of *Spycatcher*). I now that it happens from time to time, but setters ujerly have the sense to enter under a sudo . . . spuder . . . false name. In any case, ten pounds a head to the winners, who are really quite clever (Liz Ward wins in spite, not bicors of her threat to transfer to the *Readers Digest* if she didernt). If you kept it up for 200 pages (which I'm perfickly sure that some of you coud) you'd proberbly win the Booker.

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed . . . The Bottoms! It was love at first sight! When she was home from her boarding school I used to see her almost every day sometimes because their house was right opposite the Town Hall Annexe. For a long time I used to go to bed early . . .

'The Signora had no business to do it' said Miss Bartlett, 'no business at all. When did you first notice?'

'About thirty years ago, Miss, in my younger and more vulnerable years.' (My childhood was a queer and not altogether happy one).

No-one would have believed, in the last years of the nineteenth century that 'human affairs' were being watched. It was lovely!

LIZ WARD

Granted: I am an inmate
Of a mental hospital
As I take up my pen at leisure
I have never begun a novel.

All this happened, more or less, while
the present century was in its teens,
It was a bright cold day in April,
And the clocks were striking thirteen.

Had my watch stopped? No, but the hands
Do not seem to be going around.
The idea of eternal return
Is a mysterious one.

I am an invisible man,
Not everyone knows how I killed:
He was an inch, perhaps two,
Under six feet, powerfully built.

The quest for her: in thought of her,
It is a truth universally acknowledged
Miss Brook had that kind of beauty
And — and — what comes next?

DENNIS MACBETH

In Poland's deepest autumn, a network of roads, like veins, was strung over the land, interlacing, branching, dwindling to nothing. While still a young man, I was set down from the carrier's cart towards the end of November, during a thaw. The hamlet stood on a gentle rise in the flat, wheat-growing north-east. I met my Aunt Augusta for the first time.

'Lor' love you! So they've killed Ferdinand!'

'My father has sent a telegram to the war office.'

It was love at first sight. In my younger and more vulnerable years, my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents.

All nights should be so dark, all winters so warm.

Afterwards, she went through into the little front room, the tape measure still dangling about her neck, and allowed herself a glass of port.

ALISON PRINCE

For a long time I used to go to bed early. Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital; my keeper is watching me, he never lets me out of his sight: there's a peephole in the door, and my keeper's eye is the shade of brown that can never see through a blue-eyed type like me.

Since I came to this place I have been very restless, wasting my energies in the futile beginning of ill-conceived books:

I was the shadow of the waxwing slain
By the false azure in the windowpane.

And — and — what comes next? Yesterday evening I was thinking of her; I was talking with her, as I often used to do, more easily in imagination than in her presence: when suddenly I said to myself: but she is dead. I shall soon be quite dead in spite of all.

RUSSELL LUCAS

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Take me to your Leader
by Moanin' Minnie
14-8
At the home of rank-and-file SDP MP Ross Cromarty....
OH GOD — ANOTHER KNOCK AT THE DOOR
tappity tap
THEY WON'T LEAVE ME ALONE NOW THAT I WIELD A BLOCK VOTE OF 20% IN THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY
tap tiddly tap tap
IT'LL BE ANOTHER FACTION··· "GRASSROOTS UNITY"... OR "YES TO UPRISING"... OR W.E.W.* OR EVEN THE DREADED C.A.M.P.O.**
OR ANOTHER CORPSE WITH BACKSTAB WOUNDS
* Recently-enobled Roy
** Campaign for Pure Owenism (membership=1)
···THINGS ALWAYS GET CHAOTIC AND DIRTY WHEN YOU HAVE A POWER VACUUM
tap tap
CLEAN UP YOUR POWER VACUUM SQUIRE?
MMMMM
POWER VACUUM CLEANER
JOHN MINNION

Chess

OUT WITH THE warning triangle. Players of a highly-strung, artistic disposition, who may be distressed and even disgusted by indecently large sums of prize-money, had better skip to the next paragraph.

That leaves the rest of us free to contemplate in awe the spoils to be won in the **Chess for Peace** tournament, 1-11 September in the Polytechnic of North London. The first prize is £50,000 plus the King Fahd trophy, £20,000 for second, £10,000 for third, and so on, with even £1,000 for the best under-12 score. So, after all those years of envious grumbles about the rewards in other sports the big money has arrived at last. But it would be premature to assume that from now on it's going to be onward and upward to ever bigger pay-days for chess pros. The **Chess for Peace** event may just be a one-off. At any rate there are no signs of other tournaments that can match its largesse.

So it may be that in the end the more influential innovation will be **Chess for Peace**'s abhorrence of the draw. Now, a drawn game may be perfectly good play — in fact, perhaps only a drawn game can be played *perfectly* well. But as a result, it leaves everything to be desired. Tennis, by contrast, has such a marvellously dramatic scoring system: 0-5 down in the final set you can still win, but there is no way at all in which you can play for a draw. In chess, however, though draws are sometimes agreed without justification, it is in the nature of the game that a draw is an inevitable result from some positions. And what can be done about that?

It was not uncommon in the leisurely days (and even weeks and months!) of 19th-century tournaments for two players who had drawn to be set to work again until they could come up with a decisive result. Indeed, I believe this is the origin of the common continental term for a draw — 'remis' ('sent back' — or is it the pieces that are 'set up again'?). Anyway, in the **Chess for Peace** tournament this practice is to be revived in the frenzied mode of today with two quickplay games in the event of a draw. If these are indecisive, then a third game at speed. And if that's a draw it's to be counted as a win for Black. Got that? Obviously it's a wonderful recipe for gnashed teeth and beaten breast. Still, it's a procedure that may please more people than it enriches.

Meanwhile and elsewhere, with only four rounds remaining in the Szirak Interzonal John Nunn was in the lead, despite having lost to Glenn Flear, the other English competitor. There's no danger of those two being labelled 'pommie cheats'!

On the home front, the British Championship is under way in the Swansea Leisure Centre, with Jon Speelman defending the title he has won for the last two years. Here is some early action from two of his main rivals:

Short-Hennigan, Round 1. Alekhine Defence.
1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. Nf3 g6 5. Bc4 Nb6 6. Bb3 Bg7 7. a4 a5 8. 0-0 0-0 9. h3 Nc6 10. Qe2 dxe5 11. dxe5 Nd4 12. Nxd4 Qxd4 13. Re1 e6 Not normally good in such positions because it weakens the black squares. I think 13 . . . Be6 is preferable. **14. Nd2 Bd7 15. c3 Qc5 16. Nf3 Bc6 17. Be3 Qe7 18. Bg5 Qc5 19. Nd4 Bd5 20. Bxd5 Qxd5** 20 . . . Nxd5 would avoid the bind he falls under in the game, since he could then meet 21. f4 with . . . h6 and . . . Nxf4. **21. f4 Qc4 22. Qxc4 Nxc4 23. b3 Nb6 24. c4 Rfc8 25. Rad1** Short doesn't do anything spectacular. He contents himself with tidying his position and leaves the strength of his line-domination in the d-file and the h4-d8 diagonal to win the game for him. **Bf8 26. Nb5 Bc5+ 27. Kf1 c6 28. Nd6 Rc7 29. Rd3 Nd7 30. Ne4 Kf8 31. Red1 1-0.**

Mestel-Martin, Round 2. Sicilian Defence.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Qc7 6. g3 a6 7. Bg2 Nf6 8. 0-0 Nxd4 9. Qxd4 Bc5 10. Bf4 d6 11. Qd2 h6 12. Rad1 e5 13. Be3 Ke7 Mestel makes this seem rather silly, though defending the backward pawn with the King is a known plan. Note that 13 . . . Bxe3 14. fxe3! Ke7? allows 15. Rxf6. Taimanov played 13 . . . Bg4 and almost equalized in one of the 6 match-games he lost to Fischer in 1971. **14. f4 Be6 15. fxe5 dxe5 16. Nd5+ Bxd5 17. exd5 Rhe8** This, which appears to be a wasted tempo, may well be Black's real mistake. 17 . . . Rhd8!? **18. Kh1 Rad8 19. Qc3 Kd6 20. b4 Bxe3 21. Qxe3 e4** As Mestel indicated after the game, it's important that Black can't set up some sort of a blockade with 21 . . . b5 because of 22. Rd3 Rc8 23. Bh3. **22. Rxf6+! gxf6 23. Qf4+ Re5 24. Qxf6+ Kd7 25. Bh3+ Ke8 26. d6 1-0.** With three lethal threats. As Andrew Martin deplored the cruelty with which the final position was left on a demo board for 21 hours, perhaps I should beg his pardon for further compounding the suffering.

Last week's Position [1RQ2nk1/5pp1/3q3p/3N3P/4P1K1/1p4P1/8/5r2]: **Miles-Schneider, Philadelphia 1980** finished **1. Qxf8+! Qxf8 2. Ne7+ Kh7 3. Rxf8 b2** Or 3 . . . Re1 4. Kf5! b2 and now comes the same scorpion's sting — 5. Ng6!. **4. Ng6! 1-0.**

George Botterill

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This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please.)

☐ The 5.40 am Norwich-London train is full by the time it reaches Colchester and many of the passengers are hard at work with radiophones and portable computers 'playing the Tokyo market', says Mr Theo Steel, assistant general manager of BR's Eastern Region. This causes problems for ticket inspectors. The City yuppies hate being interrupted as they do their dawn dealings at 100 mph. — *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

☐ A library book anonymously returned 20 years overdue in Bolsover, Derbyshire yesterday was called *How To Become A Councillor*. — *Burnley Express* (George Moor)

☐ They're all heart at the Sunderland DHSS office. Consider the letter to a claimant in the High Barnes area of the city: 'Further to your claim for reconnection charges to your cooker. Please forward medical evidence that cooked meals are essential in the diet you follow for your duodenal ulcer. If possible please forward a copy of your diet sheet.' — *Guardian* (Mrs Janet Mearns)

☐ A Lake District hotelier is offering a £10-a-day holiday programme for animals on holiday with their owners. The 'yuppie puppy' plan provides the services of the hall porter for walking the mutts and a special à la carte menu which includes sautéd chicken livers and chocolate-dipped Bonios. — *The Times* (David Bays)

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